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TET OFFENSIVE

Insurgent surge that stunned US forces

FUTURE
ISSUE 110

Queen Victoria's AFRICAN WAR

STALINGRAD

THE CITY THAT REFUSED TO DIE

TACTICS THAT BROKE HITLER'S INVASION

FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS OF 6th ARMY SOLDIERS

BLOW-BY-BLOW TIMELINE OF KEY TURNING POINTS

DASSAULT MIRAGE III

Inside the fighter that formed the backbone of Israel's air force

HERO OF HILL 205

Ranger's Medal of Honor valour recognised 70 years on

BATTLE OF HUE

Bloody street fighting in Vietnam's ancient capital

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KOKODA
The Long Bloody Trail

BY THE MIDDLE OF 1942 Japan's empire extended in depth across vast tracts of China, the Pacific and Southeast Asia. In the six months after its devastating attack on *Pearl Harbor, Hong Kong* had surrendered, rapidly followed by *Malaya* and *Singapore*, then the *Philippines* and finally, the *Dutch East Indies*.

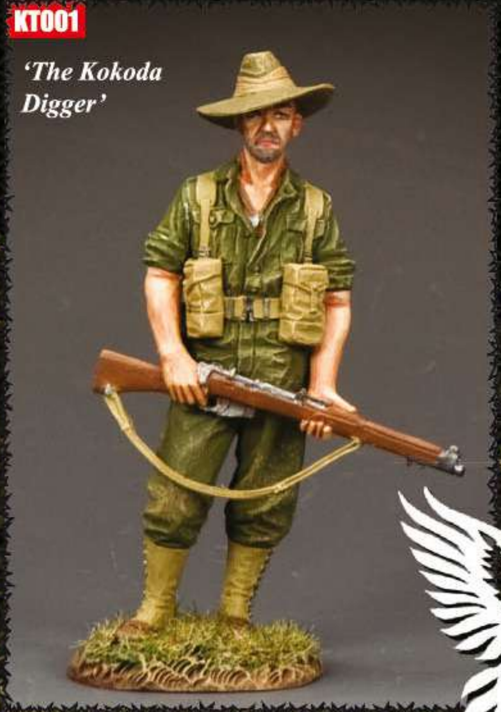
Now Japan stood poised to attack the ***Australian Territory of Papua, New Guinea*** and its main city of Port Moresby, just one hundred miles north of Australia itself.

If successful, the Japanese would use New Guinea as a forward base to directly threaten Australia and sever its links to America, India and Britain.

It was essential then that the enemy advance be blocked and then thrown back by whatever means necessary at whatever place was possible...

A PLACE CALLED KOKODA

The epic struggle to defeat the all-victorious Japanese on the Kokoda Trail is also the story of incredible Australian endurance and bravery in the most difficult of battlefield circumstances.


KT001
'The Kokoda Digger'

Those who fought there would never forget the steep, mountainous terrain coupled with the constant damp of the tropical jungle and the ever present ravages of disease and discomfort.

LAUNCH DATE: AUGUST 2022

This latest ***King & Country*** collection of 1:30 scale, all-metal, hand-painted figures pays tribute to all the Aussie ***'Diggers'*** who fought and died on that long, bloody trail called **'KOKODA'** and the battles that followed it.

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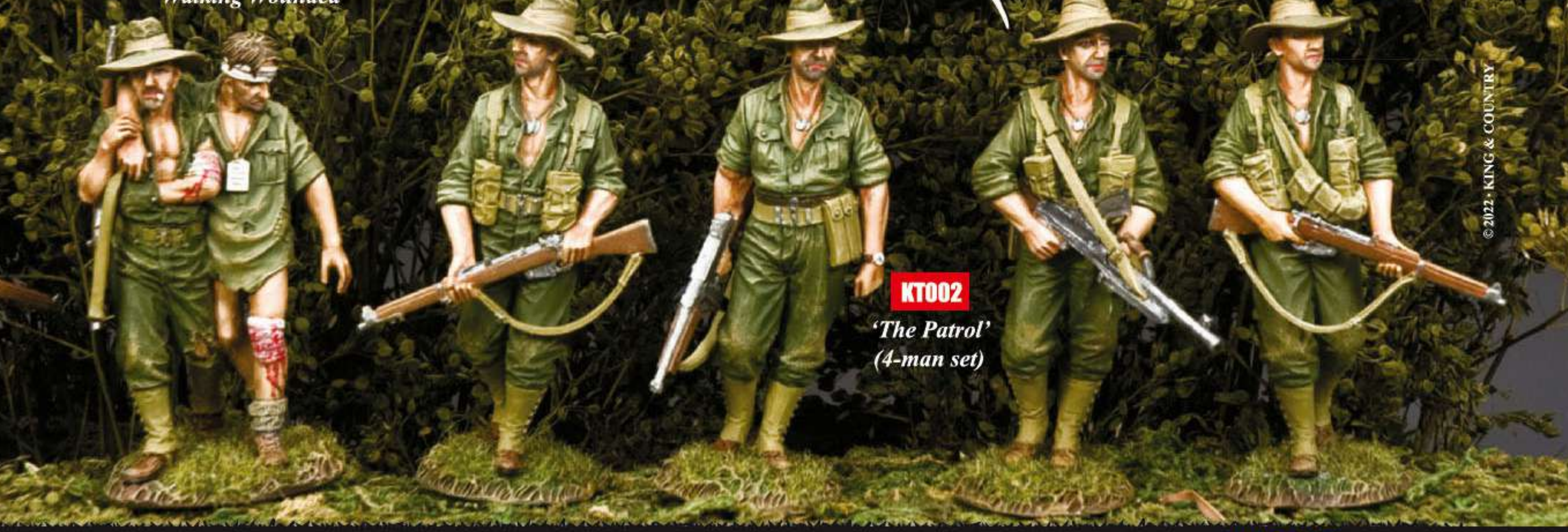
KT003
'Walking Wounded'

KT002
'The Patrol'
(4-man set)

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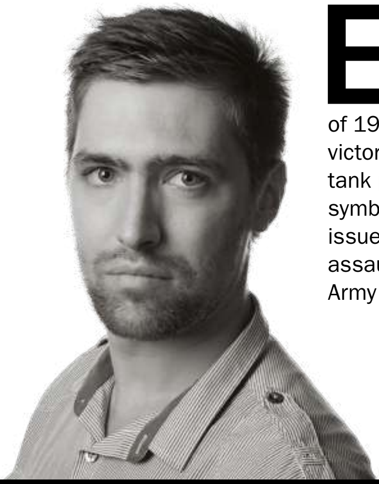
Welcome



Eighty years ago the war on the Eastern Front came to a terrible crescendo as the battle for the industrial and spiritual heart of the Soviet Union, Stalingrad, began. When the German Sixth Army embarked on the assault of this key city in the summer of 1942 they may have believed they were on the precipice of a great victory over the Red Army. The city was of importance for its role in tank production, but more important to both Hitler and Stalin was its symbolic value, being named after the General Secretary himself. This issue explores how the battle for Stalingrad began with a promising assault, descended into an attritional winter siege, and how the Red Army was ultimately able to surround and defeat the Sixth Army.

Tim

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

CONTRIBUTORS

MARK SIMNER

An expert in British 19th century military history and the author of several books on the topic, this issue Mark takes a look at the Mahdist War. He recounts the military disasters Britain suffered in the conflict and how Lord Kitchener led the campaign to restore control (p12).

JON TRIGG

This issue the former British Army officer and author of several books on the Second World War recounts the Battle of Stalingrad: how it began with a resurgent summer campaign and turned the Eastern Front on its head in the winter of 1942 (p22).

HARETH AL BUSTANI

This month Hareth turns his attention to a double feature on the Vietnam War. First he takes a look at the Tet Offensive of 1968 (p46), followed by the critical clash in that campaign: The Battle of Hué (p52).

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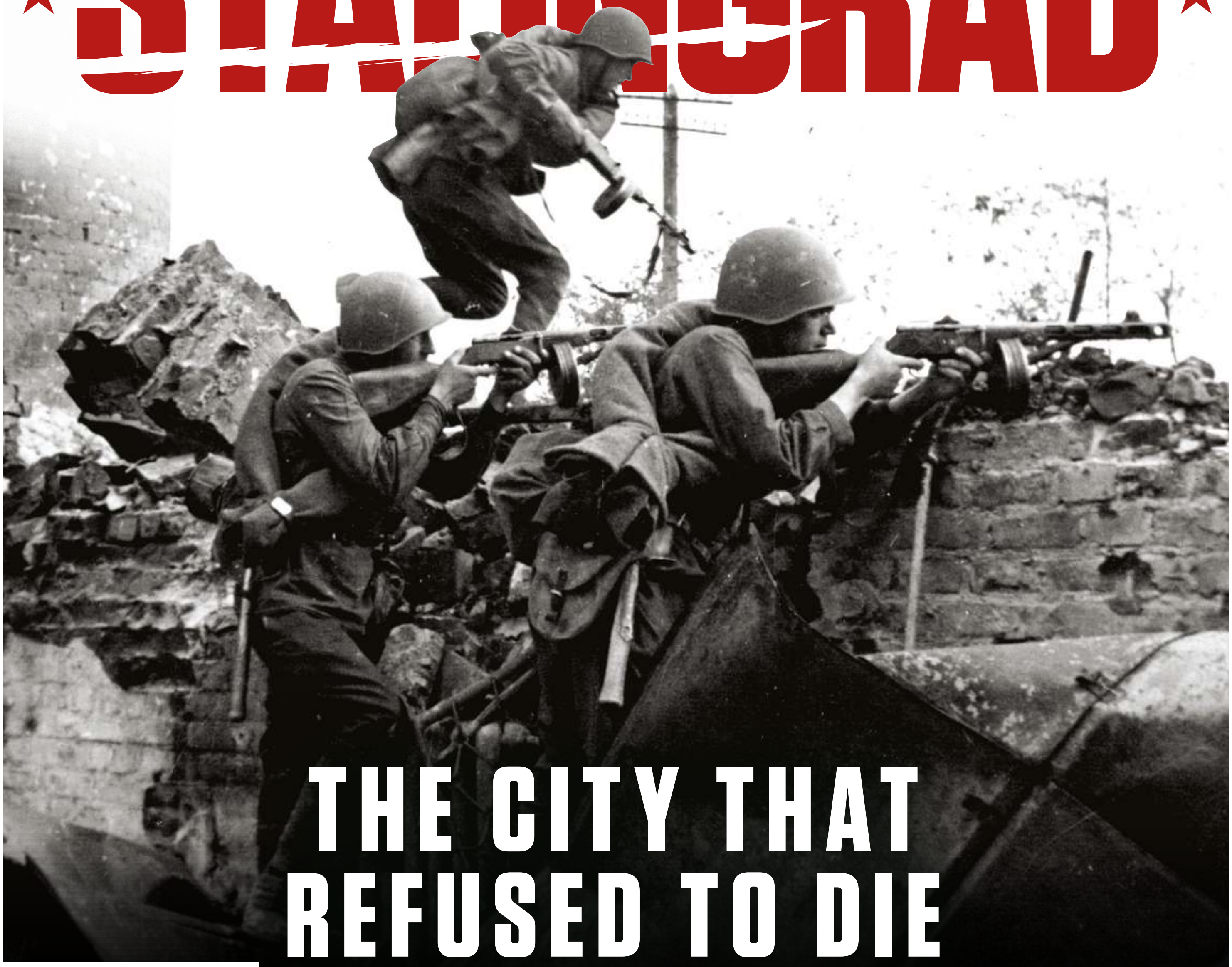
THE CITY THAT REFUSED TO DIE

STALINGRAD



THE CITY THAT REFUSED TO DIE

22 Inside the battle that doomed Germany's Sixth Army and turned the tide of the war in the East

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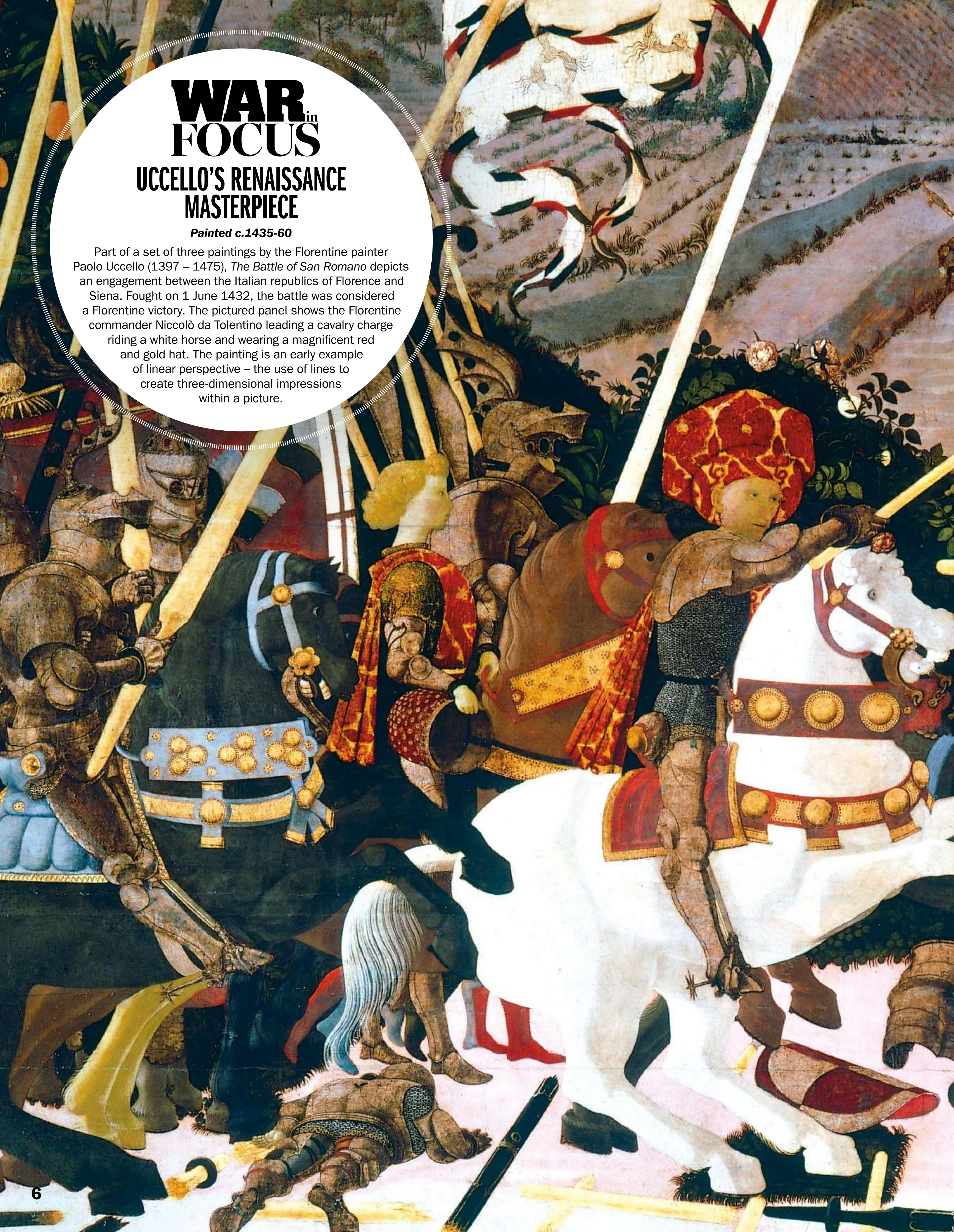
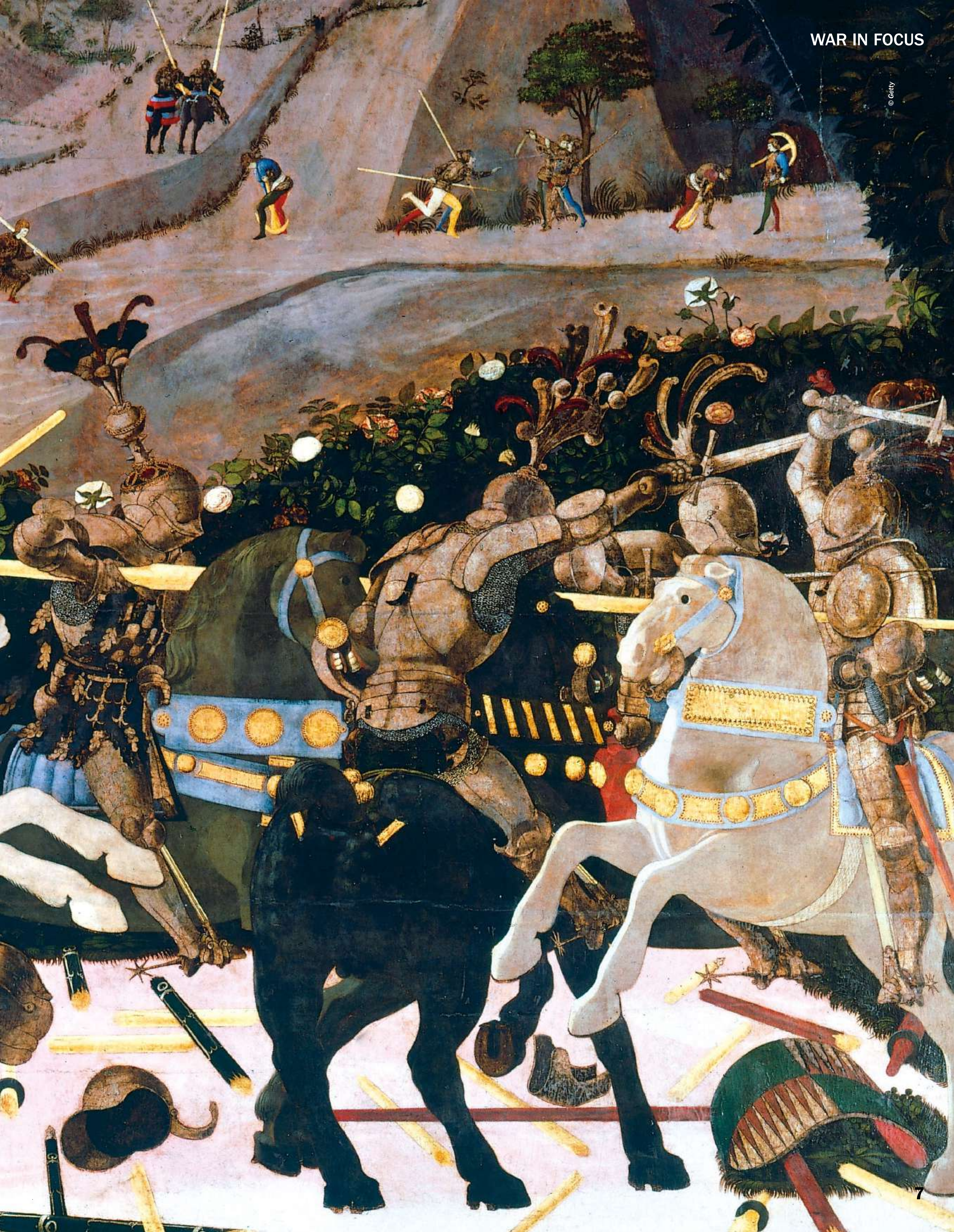


WAR in FOCUS

UCCELLO'S RENAISSANCE MASTERPIECE

Painted c.1435-60

Part of a set of three paintings by the Florentine painter Paolo Uccello (1397 – 1475), *The Battle of San Romano* depicts an engagement between the Italian republics of Florence and Siena. Fought on 1 June 1432, the battle was considered a Florentine victory. The pictured panel shows the Florentine commander Niccolò da Tolentino leading a cavalry charge riding a white horse and wearing a magnificent red and gold hat. The painting is an early example of linear perspective – the use of lines to create three-dimensional impressions within a picture.

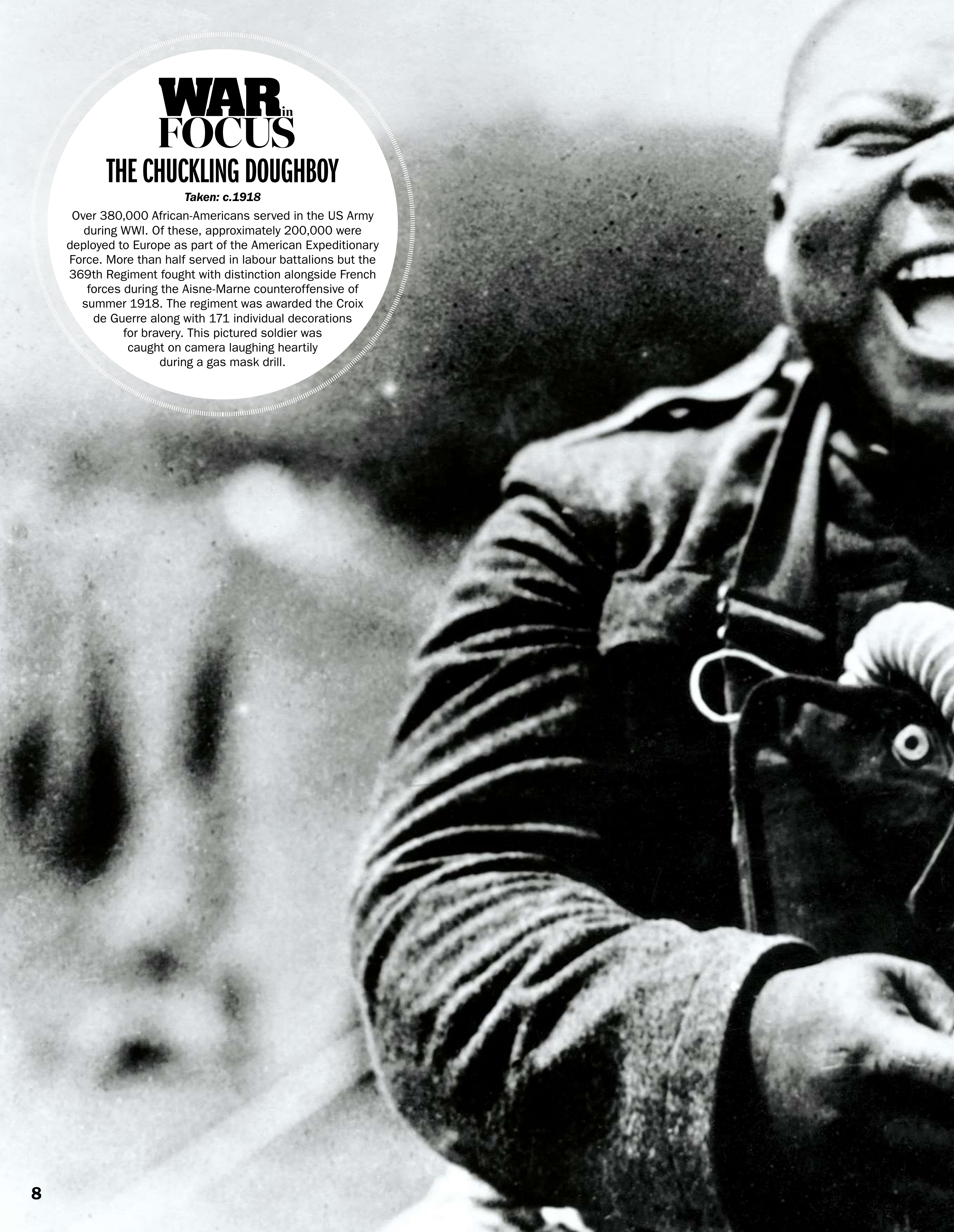


© Getty

THE CHUCKLING DOUGHBOY

Taken: c.1918

Over 380,000 African-Americans served in the US Army during WWI. Of these, approximately 200,000 were deployed to Europe as part of the American Expeditionary Force. More than half served in labour battalions but the 369th Regiment fought with distinction alongside French forces during the Aisne-Marne counteroffensive of summer 1918. The regiment was awarded the Croix de Guerre along with 171 individual decorations for bravery. This pictured soldier was caught on camera laughing heartily during a gas mask drill.



© Getty

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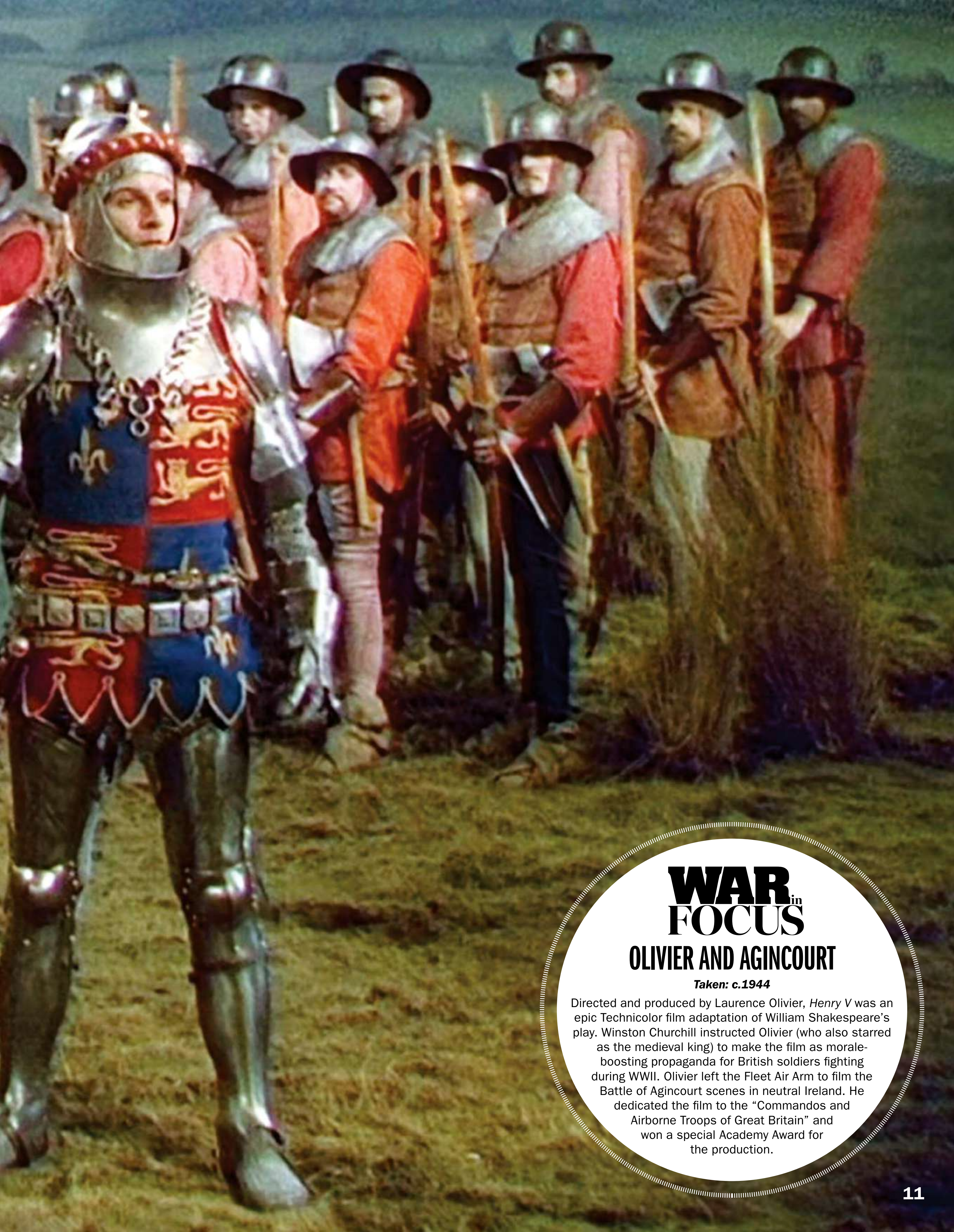


WAR in FOCUS

OLIVIER AND AGINCOURT

Taken: c.1944

Directed and produced by Laurence Olivier, *Henry V* was an epic Technicolor film adaptation of William Shakespeare's play. Winston Churchill instructed Olivier (who also starred as the medieval king) to make the film as morale-boosting propaganda for British soldiers fighting during WWII. Olivier left the Fleet Air Arm to film the Battle of Agincourt scenes in neutral Ireland. He dedicated the film to the "Commandos and Airborne Troops of Great Britain" and won a special Academy Award for the production.

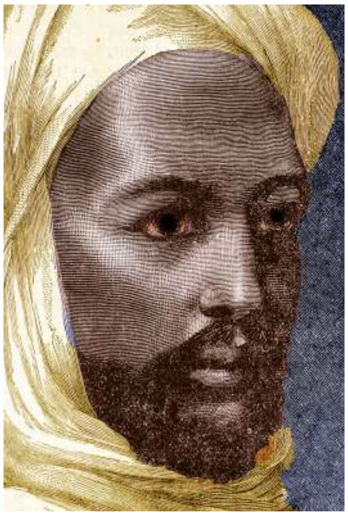
TIMELINE OF...

MAHDIST WAR

Muhammad Ahmad transforms Sudan into a militant Islamic state and directly clashes with Egyptian and European colonial armies

A late-19th or early 20th-century photograph of Mahdist warriors from the Hadendoa tribe.

29 June 1881



THE ‘GUIDED ONE’

Sudanese anger against the religious and economic policies of Ottoman-Egyptian officials leads a Muslim cleric called Muhammad Ahmad to proclaim himself the ‘Mahdi’ (‘Guided One’) – the promised redeemer of the Islamic world. His ‘Mahdist’ followers revolt against the Egyptians.

Muhammad Ahmad establishes the Mahdist State, a Sudanese theocracy that he rules until his death in 1885 – six months after the fall of Khartoum

12 August 1881

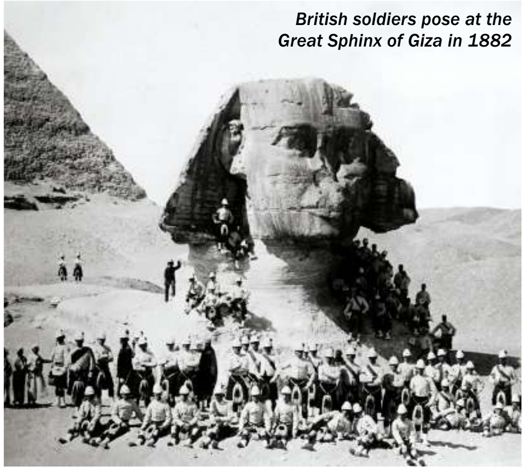
BATTLE OF ABA ①

The first battle of the war sees the Mahdists defeat Egyptian soldiers who have landed on Aba Island on the River Nile south of Khartoum. The Mahdi himself is wounded but his force only loses 12 men compared to 120 Egyptian dead.

July – September 1882

ANGLO-EGYPTIAN WAR ②

The British occupy Egypt to firmly establish their interests in the region, particularly to protect control of the Suez Canal. This de-facto occupation (known as the ‘veiled protectorate’) drags Britain into the Egyptians’ war against the Mahdists.



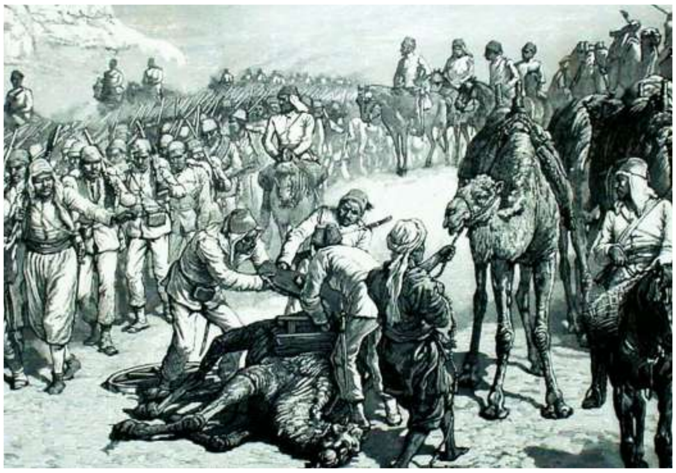
British soldiers pose at the Great Sphinx of Giza in 1882

> “DISPLAYING THE ‘UTMOST STEADINESS’ DURING A DESPERATE HAND-TO-HAND BATTLE, THE BRITISH INFLICT 4,000 CASUALTIES”

3-5 November 1883

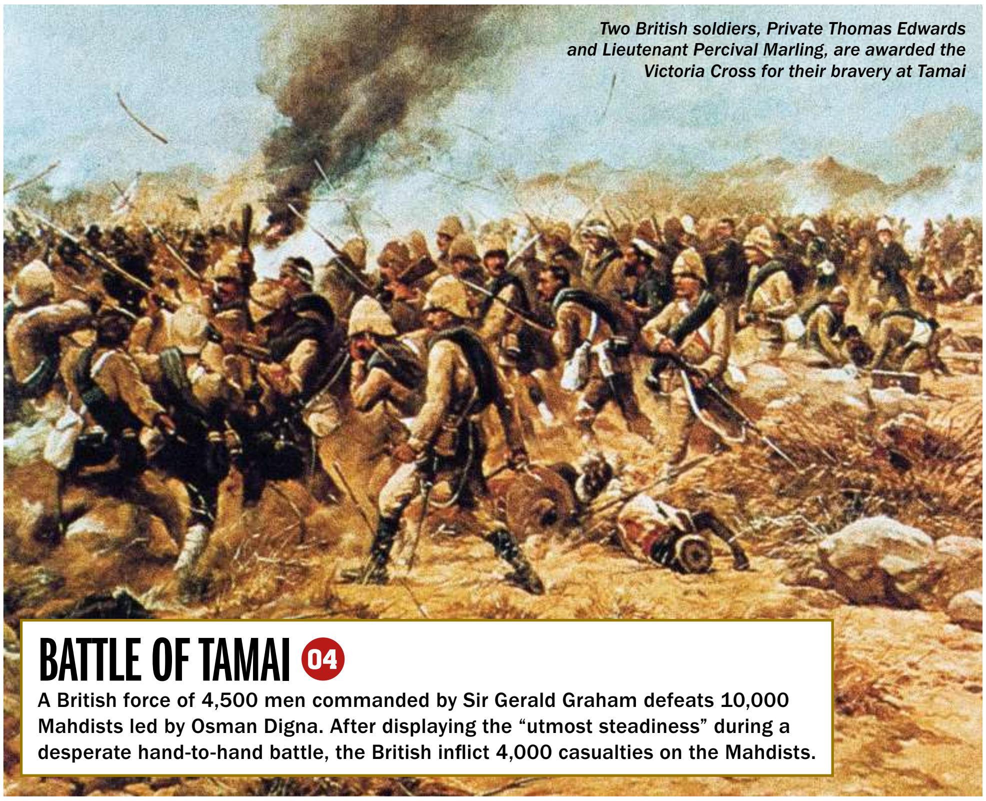
BATTLE OF SHAYKAN 03

Mohammad Ahmed leads approximately 40,000 Mahdist warriors to victory against an Anglo-Egyptian force commanded by Colonel William Hicks. Seven-thousand soldiers of Hicks’ 11,000-strong army (including Hicks) are killed, with a further 2,000 captured.



The army of William Hicks depicted on the march into Sudan. Hicks is known by the Egyptians as ‘Hicks Pasha’

13 March 1884



Two British soldiers, Private Thomas Edwards and Lieutenant Percival Marling, are awarded the Victoria Cross for their bravery at Tamai

BATTLE OF TAMAI 04

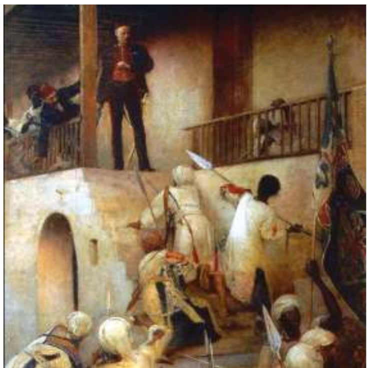
A British force of 4,500 men commanded by Sir Gerald Graham defeats 10,000 Mahdists led by Osman Digna. After displaying the “utmost steadiness” during a desperate hand-to-hand battle, the British inflict 4,000 casualties on the Mahdists.

13 March 1884 – 26 January 1885

SIEGE OF KHARTOUM 05

The Egyptian-controlled Sudanese capital falls to the Mahdists after a ten-month siege. The garrison is almost completely destroyed, with the most high-profile loss being the British commander General Charles Gordon.

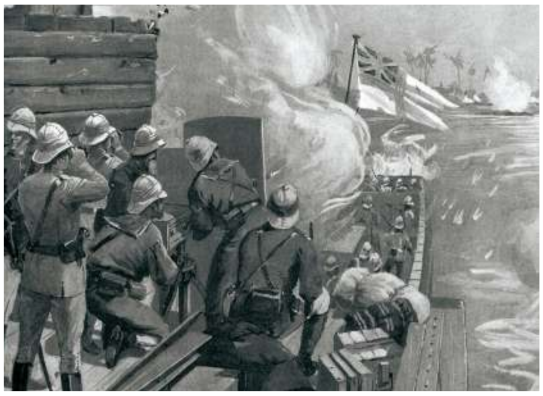
General Gordon’s Last Stand by Irish painter George W Joy. Gordon becomes an iconic military hero in Victorian society



1884-85

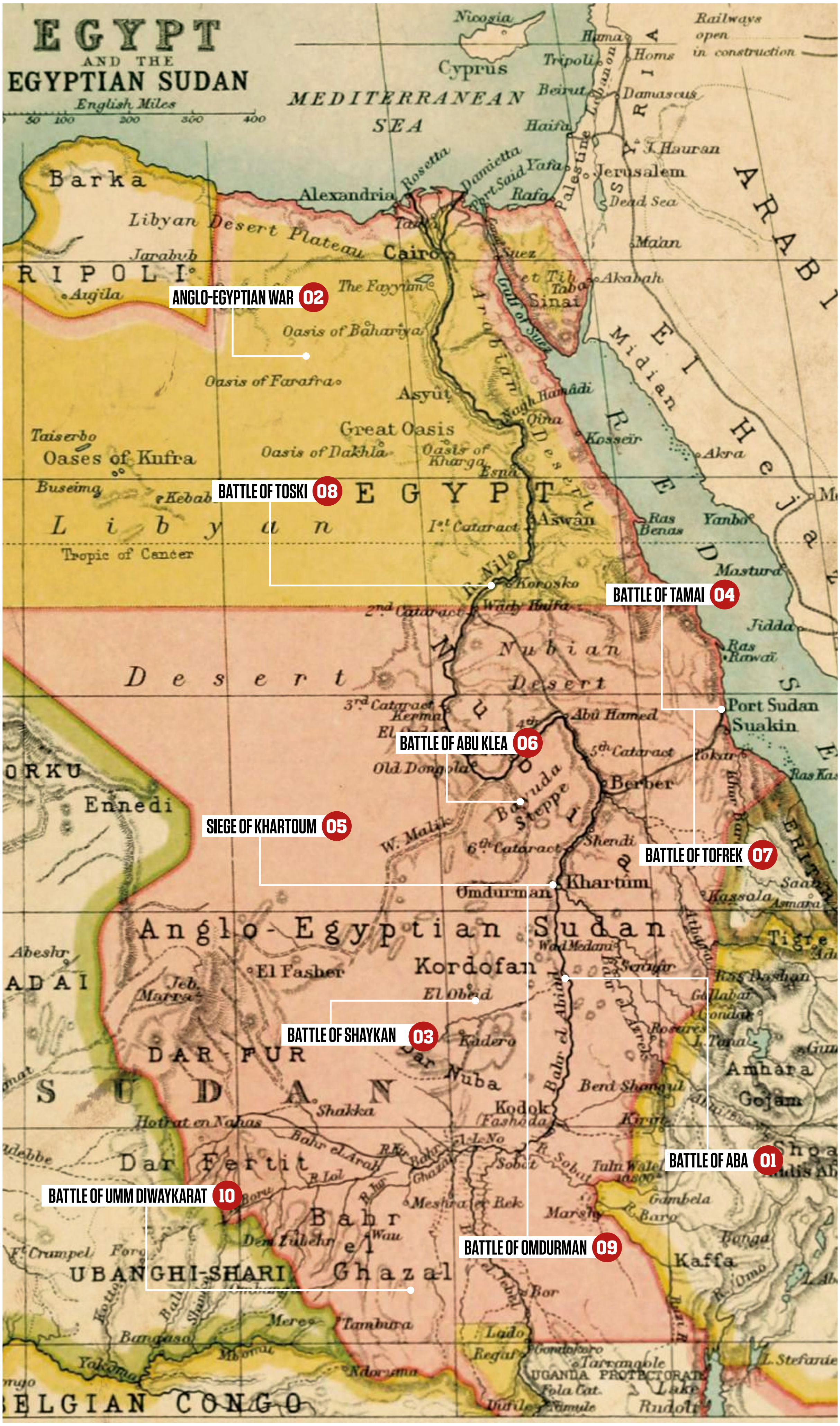
NILE EXPEDITION

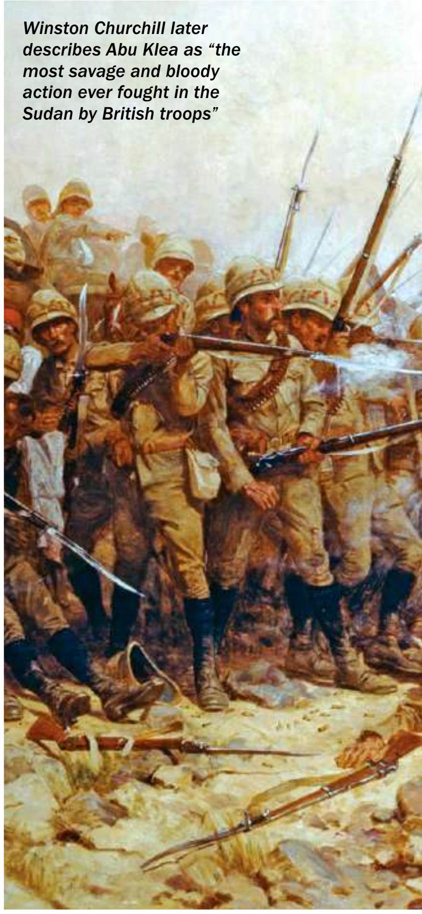
Public pressure forces the British government to send a military expedition to relieve General Gordon at the Siege of Khartoum. The relief column reaches Khartoum two days after the fall of the city.



The Naval Brigade of the Nile Expedition steams downriver towards Khartoum

Images © Alamy, Getty


EGYPT
AND THE
EGYPTIAN SUDAN
English Miles
50 100 200 300 400
Railways
open
in construction
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Cyprus
Nicosia
Barka
Libyan Desert Plateau
Alexandria
Rosetta
Damietta
Port Said
Cairo
Suez
Sinai
Jerusalem
Dead Sea
Beirut
Damascus
Tripoli
Haifa
Jaffa
Jarabub
TRIPOLI
Aujila
ANGLO-EGYPTIAN WAR 02
The Fayyum
Oasis of Bahariya
Oasis of Farafra
Asyut
Great Oasis
Oasis of Dakhla
Oasis of Kharga
Oases of Kufra
Taiserbo
Buseima
Kebabo
BATTLE OF TOSKI 08
EGYPT
Libyan
Tropic of Cancer
1st Cataract
Aswan
Esna
Qena
Kosseir
Red Sea
Midian
Hejaz
Yanbo
Ras Benas
Korosko
Wady Halfa
2nd Cataract
BATTLE OF TAMAI 04
Jidda
Nubian Desert
Desert
3rd Cataract
Kerma
Abu Hamed
Port Sudan
Suakin
BATTLE OF ABU KLEA 06
Old Dongola
5th Cataract
Berber
Bayuda Steppe
ORKU
Ennedi
SIEGE OF KHARTOUM 05
W. Malik
6th Cataract
Shendi
BATTLE OF TOFREK 07
Omdurman
Khartum
Kassala
Anglo-Egyptian Sudan
Abeshr
WADAI
El Fasher
Jebel Marra
Kordofan
El Obeid
Wad Medani
Senaar
BATTLE OF SHAYKAN 03
Kadero
DAR FUR
Nuba
SUDAN
Shakka
Hofrat en Nahas
Kodok
Fashoda
Abyssinia
Amhara
Gojam
Dar Fertit
Bahr el Arab
BATTLE OF ABA 01
Sobat
Gambela
BATTLE OF UMM DIWAYKARAT 10
Bahr el Ghazal
Meshra el Rek
Wau
Dem Zubehr
BATTLE OF OMDURMAN 09
Kaffa
UBANGHI-SHARI
Tambura
Bor
Lado
Rejaf
Gondokoro
UGANDA PROTECTORATE
Lake Rudolf
BELGIAN CONGO
Yakoma
Bangaso



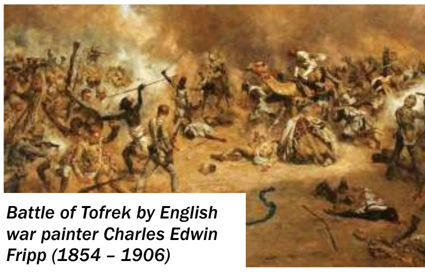
Winston Churchill later describes Abu Klea as "the most savage and bloody action ever fought in the Sudan by British troops"

BATTLE OF ABU KLEA 06

While en route to relieve General Gordon at Khartoum, a hugely outnumbered British detachment of the relief column is attacked by the Mahdists. The British win the engagement, with Gunner Alfred Smith awarded the Victoria Cross.

17 January 1885

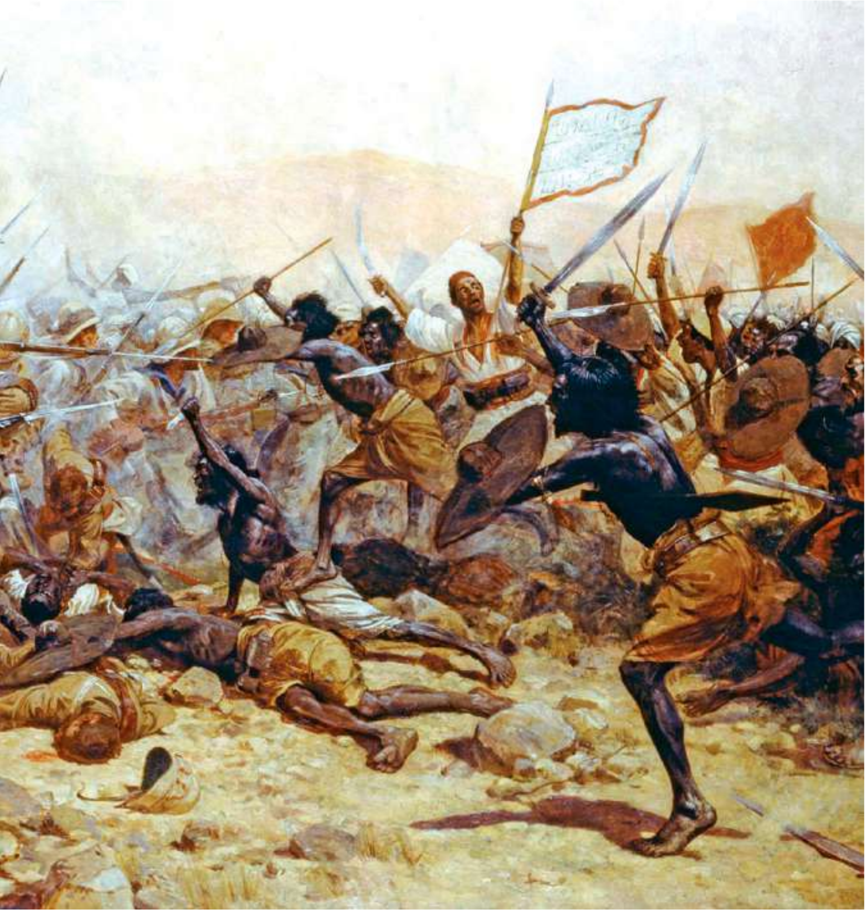
22 March 1885



Battle of Tofrek by English war painter Charles Edwin Fripp (1854 – 1906)

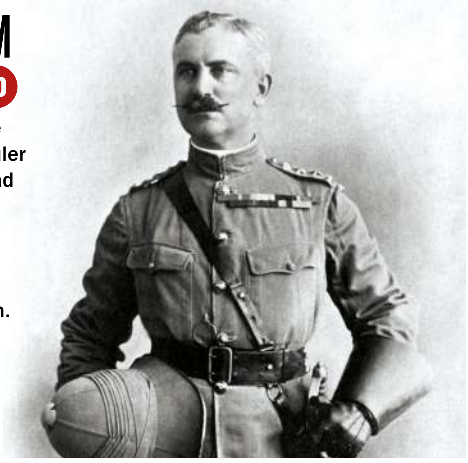
BATTLE OF TOFREK 07

British and Indian troops defeat the Mahdists as part of the Suakin Field Force. Tofrek is a heavy defeat for the Mahdists, who lose half of their 2,000-strong army.



BATTLE OF UMM DIWAYKARAT ⑩

General Francis Wingate defeats the Sudanese ruler Abdallahi ibn Muhammad and 10,000 Mahdists in the last battle of the war. The Mahdist State is replaced with Anglo-Egyptian rule over Sudan.

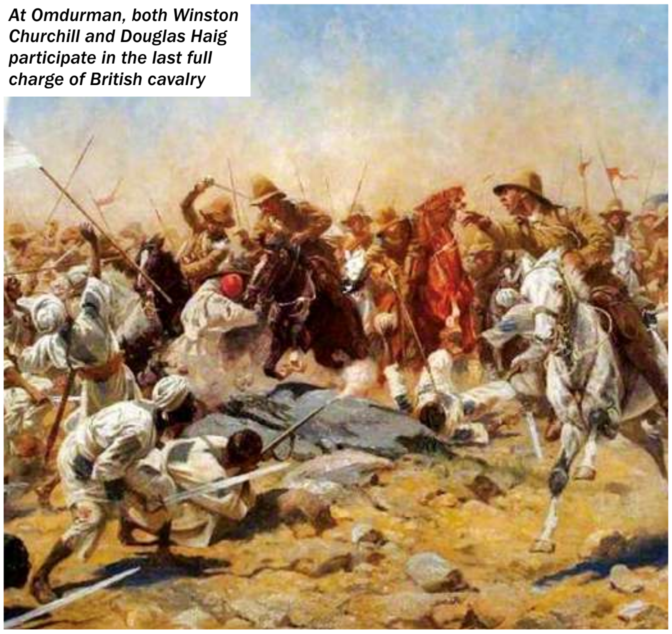


After Umm Diwaykarat, Wingate succeeds Kitchener as governor-general of Sudan and serves in this role until 1916

BATTLE OF OMDURMAN ⑨

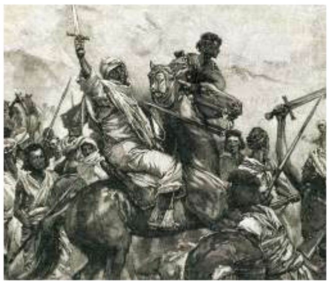
An Anglo-Egyptian expeditionary force of 25,800 soldiers commanded by Major General Herbert Kitchener heavily defeats 52,000 Mahdists. With Gordon avenged, Omdurman symbolises British efforts to reconquer Sudan.

At Omdurman, both Winston Churchill and Douglas Haig participate in the last full charge of British cavalry



BATTLE OF TOSKI ⑧

Sir Francis Grenfell leads an Anglo-Egyptian force to victory against the Mahdists in southern Egypt. Toski prevents Egypt from becoming part of the Mahdist State and demonstrates the fighting qualities of the reformed Egyptian army.



***Right;** Mahdist warriors fight at Toski*

1886-89

3 August 1889

1890-94

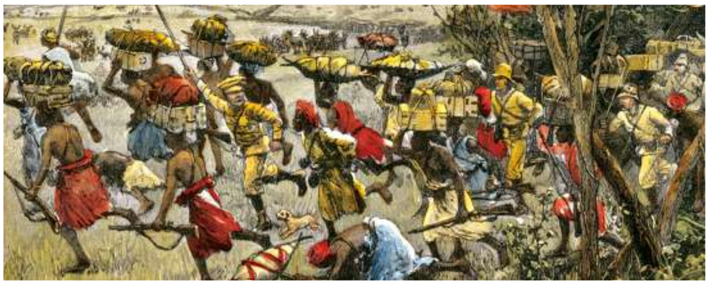
2 September 1898

25 November 1899

EMIN PASHA RELIEF EXPEDITION

Explorer Henry Morton Stanley is commissioned by the Belgians to rescue Emin Pasha, the besieged governor of Equatoria (southern Sudan), from Mahdist forces. Morton rescues the governor after a long expedition that suffers many casualties.

Morton Stanley's mission turns into one of the last major European expeditions into the interior of Africa during the 19th century



ITALIAN CAMPAIGNS

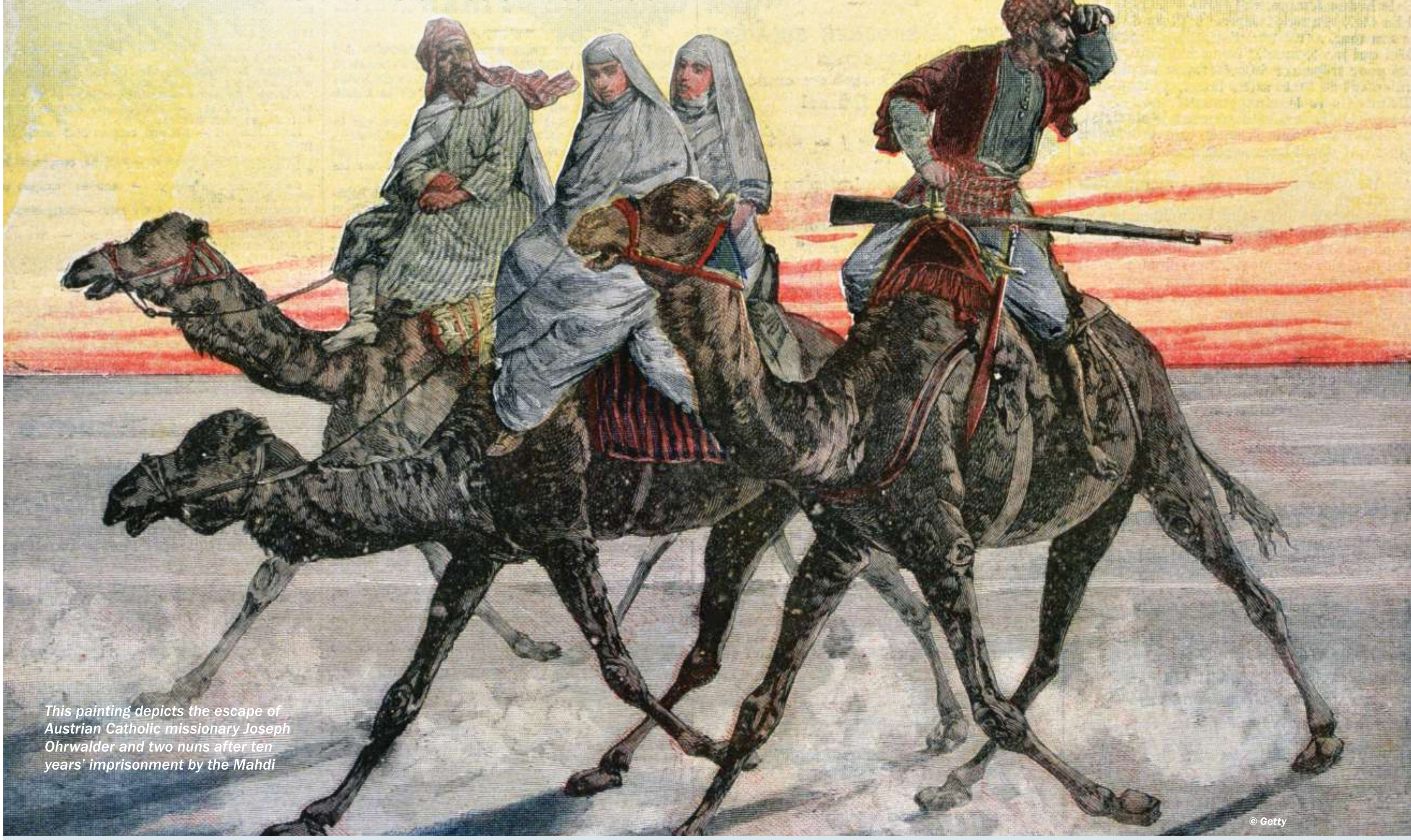
Italy becomes involved in the war when the Mahdists enter Italian Eritrea. The Italians win several battles and seize the Sudanese city of Kassala.

Italian Army bersaglieri (marksmen) pictured in 1890

Images © Alamy, Getty

THE RISE OF THE MAHDI

One of the most infamous conflicts of Queen Victoria's reign lasted from 1881 to 1899 – but exactly how did Britain become embroiled in a war in which it had little interest?



This painting depicts the escape of Austrian Catholic missionary Joseph Ohrwalder and two nuns after ten years' imprisonment by the Mahdi

© Getty

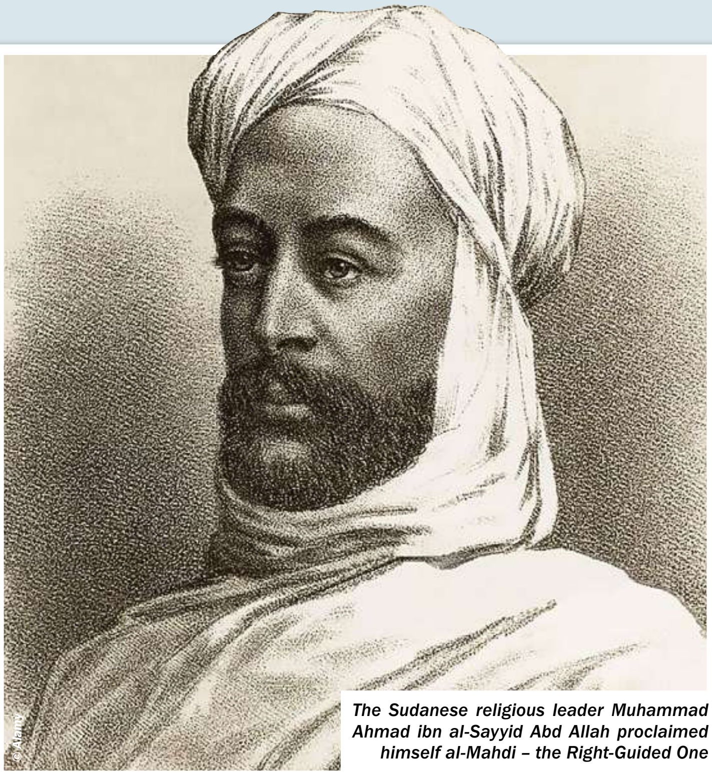
The rise of the Mahdist movement lies with Muhammad Ahmad ibn al-Sayyid Abd Allah. Born in Dongola province, Nubia, in 1844, Muhammad was the son of a humble boatbuilder. His father uprooted the family and move to Karari, a village near Khartoum in Sudan, where Muhammad developed a strong interest in Islam. He veered away from the more orthodox studies and leaned towards the Sufi tradition. As he grew, his religious beliefs and practices became increasingly strict.

No photograph of Muhammad exists but Father Joseph Ohrwalder, once a prisoner of the Mahdists, described him in his *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp*: "His outward appearance was strangely fascinating; he was a man of strong constitution, very dark complexion, and his face always wore a pleasant smile… Under this smile gleamed a set of singularly white teeth, and between the two upper middle ones was a V-shaped space… As a messenger of God, he pretended to be in direct communication with the Deity. All orders which he gave were supposed to have come to him by inspiration, and it became therefore a sin to refuse to obey them; disobedience to the Mahdi's orders was tantamount to resistance to the will of God, and was therefore punishable by death."

Muhammad joined the Sammaniyyah, a strict Sufi order, and became increasingly respected for his piousness. He soon attracted many followers, however his increasingly unorthodox ways saw him clash with religious leaders and he was expelled from the order by the shaykh. Muhammad simply re-joined the order elsewhere under another, more sympathetic shaykh.

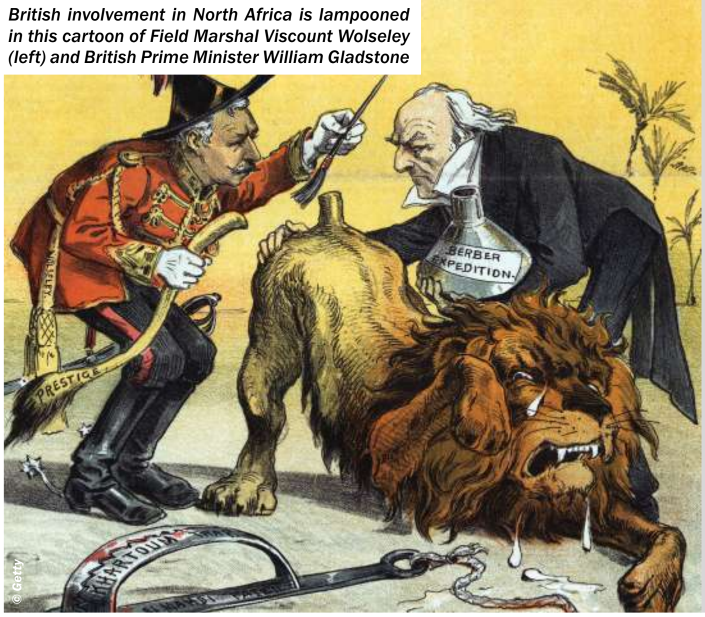
As Muhammad grew up, Sudan began experiencing problems. At the time, it was under Egyptian rule, the latter itself a province of the Ottoman Empire. Those who held power in Sudan and wielded the greatest influence were the Turkish ruling class that controlled

> "WITH THE EXCEPTION OF TWO OR THREE HUNDRED WHO HID UNDER HEAPS OF DEAD BODIES, THE ENTIRE EGYPTIAN FORCE WAS ANNIHILATED"



The Sudanese religious leader Muhammad Ahmad ibn al-Sayyid Abd Allah proclaimed himself al-Mahdi – the Right-Guided One

Rudolf Carl von Slatin (left) gave a graphic account of the comprehensive Egyptian defeat at the hands of the Mahdi's forces



British involvement in North Africa is lampooned in this cartoon of Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley (left) and British Prime Minister William Gladstone

Egypt. Ordinary Sudanese were increasingly discontented with what they saw as oppressive foreign rulers with whom they had little in common and who sought to exploit them. Sudan was waiting to explode – it just needed a spark.

Muhammad was to convert this discontent into a unified movement. Despite Sudan being inhabited by disparate tribal groups, his strict beliefs and outspoken opposition to the Egyptians appealed to many. For Muhammad, the Khedive of Egypt was little more than a puppet of the Western powers, the latter to whom the Khedive owned vast sums of money.

In mid-1881, Muhammad proclaimed himself to be al-Mahdi ('Right-Guided One'). It was now his mission to 'purify' Islam in Sudan and throw off the shackles of an unfit government. Many flocked to his cause and the Mahdist Movement (the Mahdiyya) was born.

The Mahdi's followers grew into an army and he led an uprising in Sudan which saw much territory fall under his influence, the Egyptian military unable to stop him. The more the Egyptians lost the more weapons fell into the hands of the Mahdists; the Mahdists also grew rich on plunder and the spoils of war.

Between the 3 and 5 November 1883, the Mahdi's army, known as the Ansar (meaning 'helpers'), defeated a powerful Egyptian Army at the Battle of Shaykan near El Obeid in the Sudanese province of Kordofan. The Egyptian force had been led by a former Indian Army officer called William Hicks. Hicks not only lost the battle but also his life, and virtually his entire army of 8,000 was slaughtered on the battlefield. Rudolf Carl von Slatin, a colonel in the Egyptian Army at the time, described the carnage in his book *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*: "With the exception of two or three hundred who had escaped death by hiding themselves under heaps of dead bodies, the entire force had been annihilated. Little mercy was shown."

In the wake of his victory, the Mahdi demanded taxes from the local inhabitants and imposed his extreme version of Islam on all. His fame spread far and wide. As Michael Asher writes in his book *Khartoum*: "Preaching death to anyone who refused his own brand of Islam, the Mahdi had subverted tens of thousands of tribesmen from the Nile Valley and the western Sudan, united in their shared religion and their hatred of Turco-Egyptian rule."

An even greater victory awaited – one that would ultimately bring his Mahdiyya into conflict with the British. Khartoum would be the next target.

THE SIEGE OF KHARTOUM

While the Mahdi was making his moves in Sudan, the British were exerting their control over Egypt following the Anglo-Egyptian War of 1882

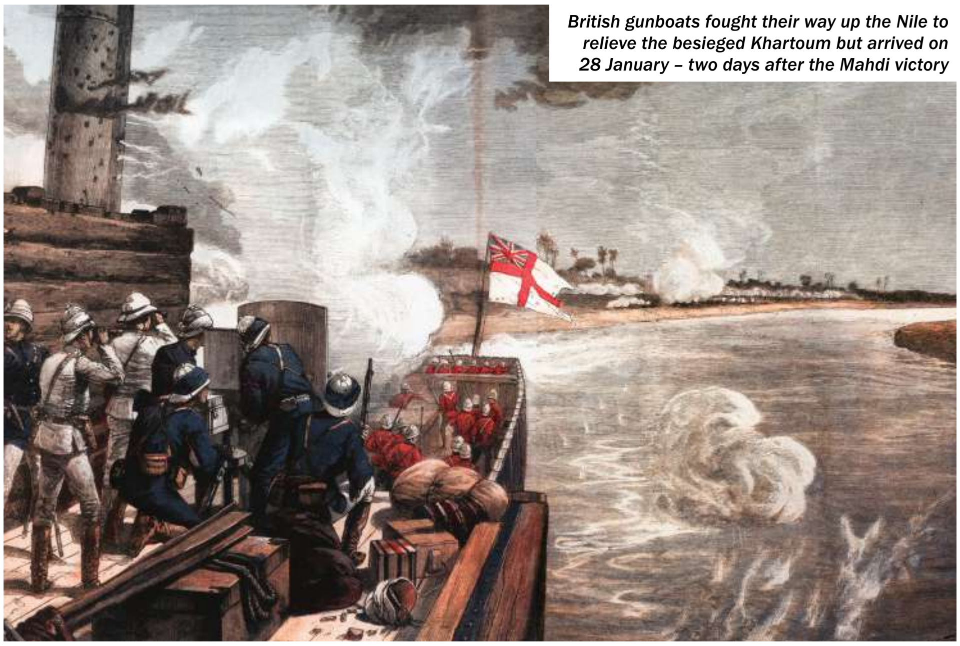
After Egypt amassed huge debts to European banks and a nationalist uprising led by Ahmed Urabi flared up and threatened Imperial control in the region, the British government decided to act: first with a naval bombardment of Alexandria then a full-scale invasion. Urabi was defeated by British forces under Garnet Wolseley at the Battle of Tell El Kebir in September 1882.

The British initially had little interest in events in Sudan and left the matter to the ruling Khedive. As Michael Asher writes: "[Lord] Baring [the British consul-general of Egypt] did not find the policy of abandoning the Sudan a hard pill to swallow… he felt that the key to success was financial solvency. Jettisoning the vast deserts and swamps to the south would be an immense blow to Egypt's pride, but a great asset to her exchequer."

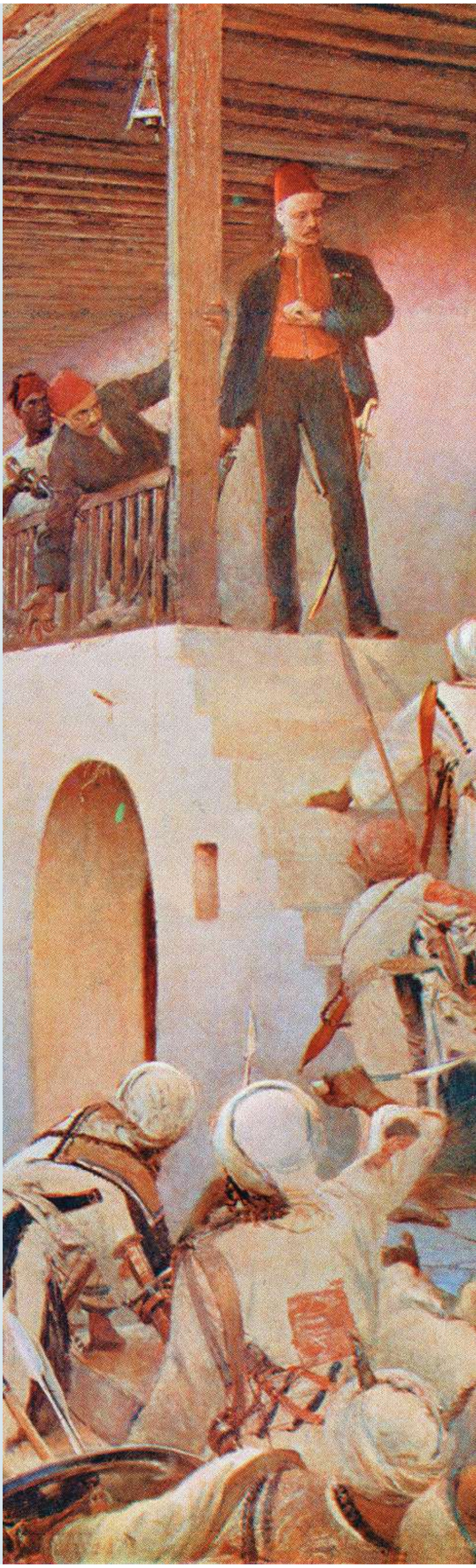
London urged Egypt to evacuate its troops from Sudan. The Egyptians agreed and appointed General Charles Gordon to oversee matters (Gordon had previously served as governor-general of Sudan from 1876 to 1879.) Unfortunately for London, Gordon had different ideas and saw the Mahdists as something to be defeated rather than appeased.

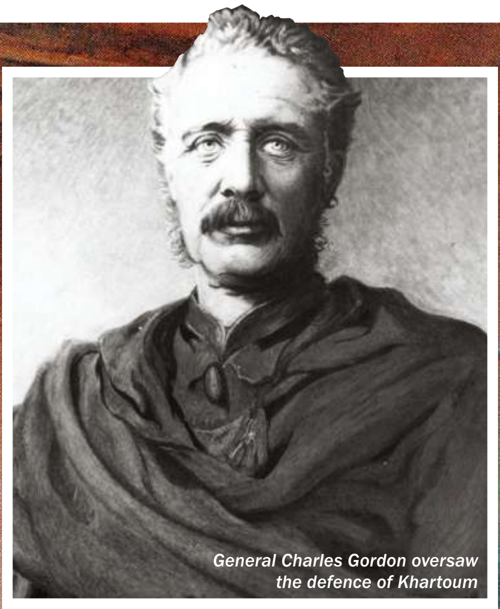
Gordon arrived in Khartoum in February 1884 and instead of organising an evacuation he set about reorganising the administration of the city and strengthening its defences. Egyptian rule in the city had been harsh, so Gordon sought to win over the local population with reforms. He even legalised the lucrative slave trade, which he had outlawed during his time as governor-general.

Meanwhile, the Mahdists were advancing on Khartoum, intent on taking the city. News of this reached Gordon, who immediately began organising a defence. Khartoum benefitted from having the Blue Nile to its north and the White Nile to its west. Gordon armed several paddle-wheel steamers and converted them into

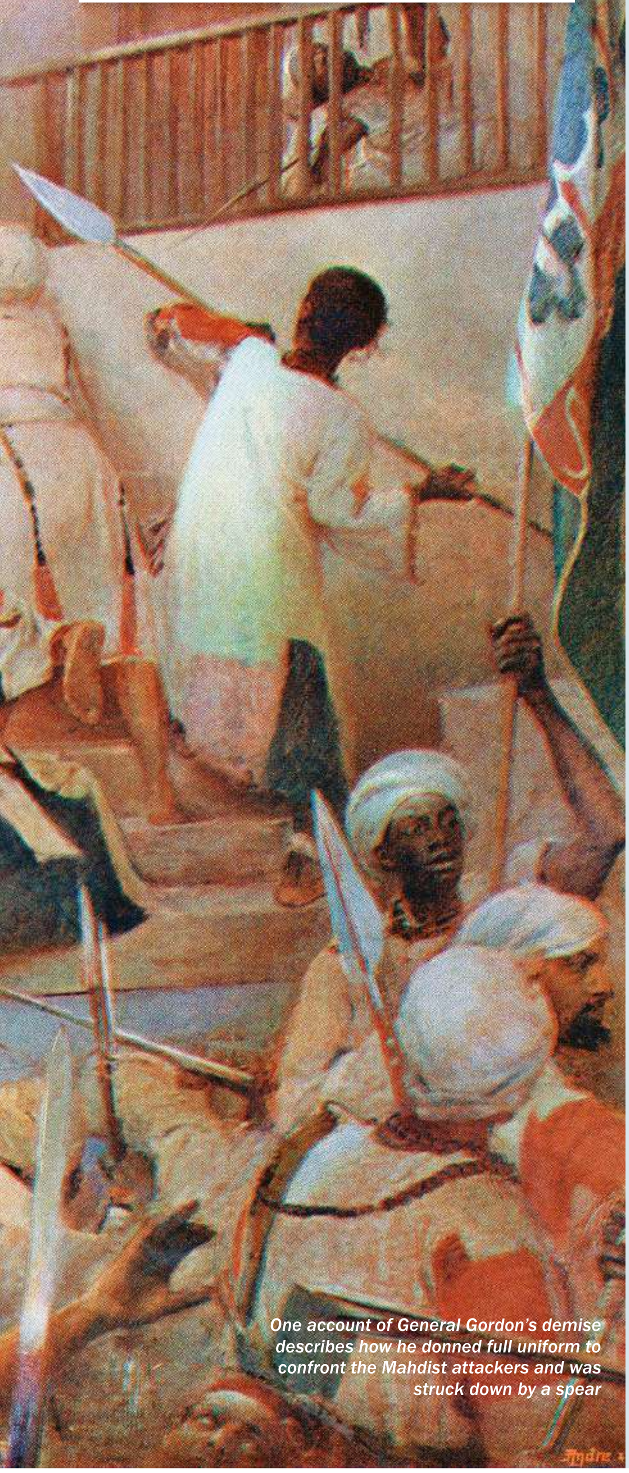


British gunboats fought their way up the Nile to relieve the besieged Khartoum but arrived on 28 January – two days after the Mahdi victory





General Charles Gordon oversaw the defence of Khartoum



One account of General Gordon's demise describes how he donned full uniform to confront the Mahdist attackers and was struck down by a spear

A group of officers of the 9th Bengal Cavalry stationed in Sudan

"THE STARVING KHARTOUM GARRISON STRUGGLED TO PUT UP ANY MEANINGFUL RESISTANCE AND WAS SOON OVERRUN. FEW ESCAPED THE WRATH OF THE MAHDISTS"

gunboats, while to the south he had trenches dug and improvised landmines laid to guard against attack from the desert.

Some of the local tribes rose against the Khartoum garrison. The telegraph to Cairo was cut and the Nile closed to traffic. The Siege of Khartoum had begun.

News of Gordon being besieged reached Britain, and the press whipped up a frenzy. Even Queen Victoria pressed the government to intervene. Prime Minister William Gladstone, who'd wanted an evacuation, was reluctant to act but was finally persuaded to order the dispatch of an expedition to the Sundanese capital in July.

The expedition was commanded by Wolseley. But because it would require substantial numbers of men, including British troops, and supplies, it took several months to organise. It was not until January 1885 that Wolseley's troops set foot in Sudan. With months having passed, the situation in Khartoum had become desperate: food was running out and morale had plummeted.

A British force known as the Desert Column, under Sir Herbert Stewart, defeated the Mahdists at the Battle of Abu Klea on 17 January; two days later the Battle of Abu Kru resulted in another British victory. Despite these defeats, the Mahdi ordered his men besieging Khartoum to press their attack before Wolseley's army could arrive.

On the night of 25/26 January, 50,000 Mahdists assaulted Khartoum and broke into the city via the Massalamieh Gate. The starving garrison struggled to put up any meaningful resistance and was soon overrun. The slaughter was terrible, with few escaping the wrath of the Mahdists, and one of those killed was Gordon. There are different accounts as to how the British general met his end: one account says he emerged from his palace in full uniform to confront his attackers before being killed by a spear, while another claims he was shot dead in the street.

Rudolf Carl von Slatin, a prisoner of the Mahdi, said: "When Gordon's head was brought to the Mahdi, [he] remarked he would have been better pleased had they taken him alive; for it was his intention to convert him [to Islam], and then hand him over to the English Government in exchange for Ahmed Arabi Pasha… My own opinion, however, is that this regret on the part of the Mahdi was merely assumed; for had he expressed any wish that Gordon's life should be spared, no one would have dared disobey his orders."

Whatever the truth, Khartoum had fallen, Gordon was dead, and the Mahdi ruled over most of Sudan. Wolseley had failed. As Mike Snook writes in *Beyond the Reach of Empire*: "The expedition was a failure, a heroic failure perhaps, but a failure for all that. Moreover it cannot be said to have come remotely close to being a success."

Nevertheless, the Mahdi had little time to enjoy his victory – he died in June 1885.

Images © Getty

KITCHENER'S RECONQUEST OF SUDAN

With rival European imperial powers vying for influence in North Africa, Britain set about crushing the Mahdist forces once and for all

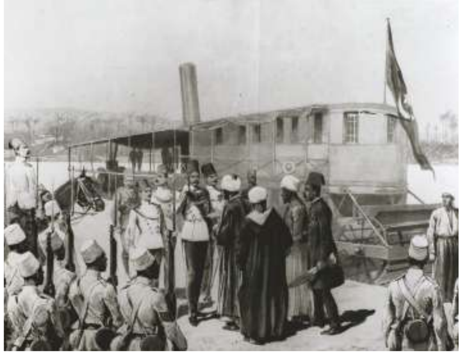
Local fighters at Roseires in Sudan, armed with basic spears and shields

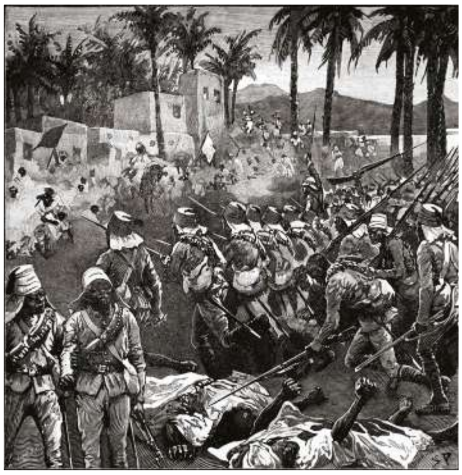
Two Anglo-Egyptian expeditions were launched against the Mahdist leader Osman Digna near Suakin. The first, led by Sir Gerald Graham, began in February 1884 and saw the First and Second Battles of El Teb and the Battle of Tamai. The expedition failed to deal with the threat posed by Digna and so Graham launched a second in January 1885. This second expedition also saw several engagements, including those at Hashin and Tofrek. The British inflicted a heavy defeat on Digna, but he would return to face the British once again.

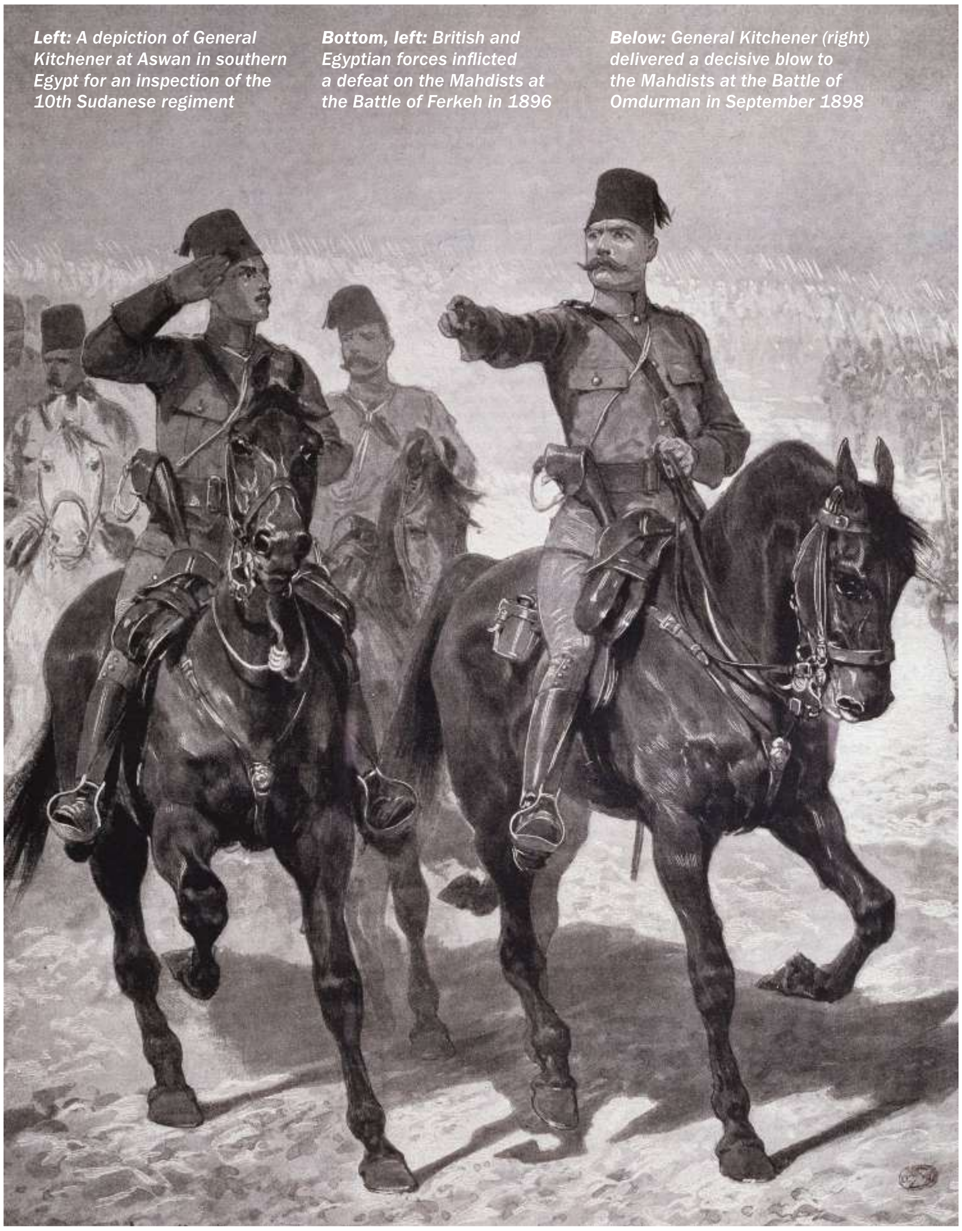
Following the withdrawal of Garnet Wolseley from Sudan, the British Government was reluctant to avenge General Charles Gordon's death and a long period of relative inactivity followed. When the Mahdi died, he was succeeded by Abdallahi ibn Muhammad, who became known as the Khalifa. Although he lacked the charisma of the Mahdi, the Khalifa continued his predecessor's cause. There would be several other clashes in the late 1880s and early 1890s, but it was only a matter of time before the British and the Mahdists would see their ultimate showdown.

The reconquest of Sudan would come over a decade after Gordon's death. However, the driving force behind the renewed campaign lay in European politics. Britain's great European rival, France, had growing interests in the region, as did Germany and Italy, all of which concerned London. However, it was following the defeat of an Italian army by the Ethiopians at the Battle of Adwa in March 1896 that the Italian Government appealed to the British for help. Worried about what the Mahdists and Ethiopians would do next, British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury agreed to a military advance into Dongola to divert Mahdist attention away from the Italian garrison at Kassala.

The man appointed to lead the expedition was Sir Horatio Herbert Kitchener, who at that time was Sirdar (commander-in-chief) of a reorganised Egyptian Army. With 16 infantry battalions, 10 squadrons of cavalry,







Left: A depiction of General Kitchener at Aswan in southern Egypt for an inspection of the 10th Sudanese regiment

Bottom, left: *British and Egyptian forces inflicted a defeat on the Mahdists at the Battle of Ferkeh in 1896*

Below: *General Kitchener (right) delivered a decisive blow to the Mahdists at the Battle of Omdurman in September 1898*

eight companies of artillery and over a dozen gunboats, Kitchener advanced into Dongola in March 1896 and occupied Akasha. As hoped, the advance forced Digna to turn his attention away from Kassala.

Kitchener was a methodical general, building a railway as he advanced to act as a crucial supply line. By September he had effectively routed the Mahdists from Dongola. The Anglo-Egyptian force continued its advance the following year. By July 1897 both Abu Hamad and Berber were taken, and by November a railway had been laid from Wadi Halfa to Abu Hamad. At the end of the year, British forces relieved Kassala.

The Anglo-Egyptian and Mahdist forces fought their final major actions in 1898. Having received reinforcements, Kitchener was again on the move and fought the Battle of Atbara on 8 April, when his forces assaulted a formidable Mahdist zeriba (an improvised stockade) commanded by Mahmud Ahmad. Kitchener then received additional reinforcements before advancing further south, where he built a zeriba (a defensive fence made of thorns) near the small settlement of Egeiga, located 6.5km north of Omdurman on the Nile's west bank.

The Battle of Omdurman took place on 2 September. It remains one of the best-remembered battles of the Victorian period and included the famous charge of the 21st Lancers, in which Winston Churchill took part. In his book, *The River War,* Churchill recalled the ferocity of the charge: “Straight before me a man threw himself on the ground… simultaneously I saw the gleam of his curved sword as he drew it back for a ham-stringing cut… I fired two shots into him at about three yards. As I straightened myself in the saddle, I saw before me another figure with uplifted sword. I raised my pistol and fired. So close were we that the pistol itself actually struck him.”

“I SAW THE GLEAM OF HIS CURVED SWORD AS HE DREW IT BACK… I FIRED TWO SHOTS INTO HIM AT ABOUT THREE YARDS”

By the end of the day Kitchener had routed the Mahdist army from the field and occupied Omdurman. The Mahdist movement was seemingly destroyed.

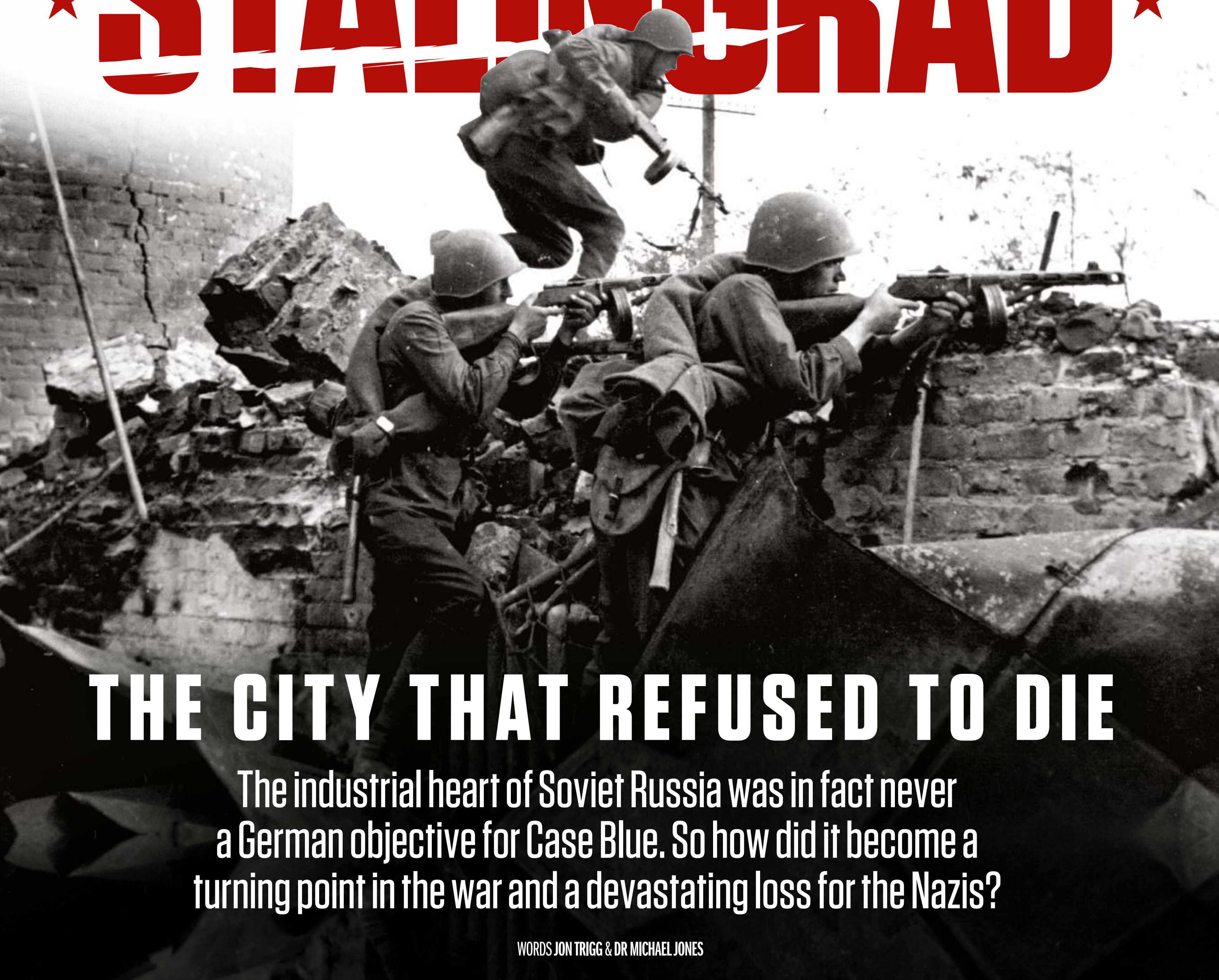
However, the story did not end at Omdurman and neither did the Mahdiyya – the Khalifa had escaped and fled. A showdown between the British and French next took place at Fashoda, which, to many at the time, seemingly threatened to erupt into war. Nevertheless, conflict was averted and on 25 November 1899 the Khalifa was finally caught and killed at the Battle of Umm Diwaykarat in Kordofan.

Francis Reginald Wingate, who commanded Anglo-Egyptian forces during that battle, wrote of the Khalifa's death in his dispatch, which was subsequently published in *The London Gazette*: “Recognising that the day was lost, he had called on his Emirs to dismount from their horses, and seating himself on his ‘furwa' or sheepskin… he had placed Khalifa Ali Wad Helu on his right and Ahmed Fedil on his left, whilst the remaining Emirs seated themselves round him, with their body-guard in line some twenty paces to their front, and in this position they had unflinchingly met their death.”

As Michael Asher writes in his book *Khartoum: The Ultimate Imperial Adventure*: “The Mahdiyya died at Umm Dibaykarat, but Mahdism did not. It simply went underground, where it remained throughout the fifty-seven years of Anglo-Egyptian rule.”

Images © Getty

★ STALINGRAD ★



THE CITY THAT REFUSED TO DIE

The industrial heart of Soviet Russia was in fact never a German objective for Case Blue. So how did it become a turning point in the war and a devastating loss for the Nazis?

WORDS **JON TRIGG & DR MICHAEL JONES**

In the summer of 1942 the German Sixth Army advanced to the city of Stalingrad as part of the Wehrmacht's Case Blue offensive to capture the oil fields of the Caucasus. In its attempt to capture the city the Axis forces were encircled and destroyed, in a battle that became perceived as a turning point in the Second World War.

At first, the Germans seemed to have won, taking most of the city in a series of bloody battles in the autumn of 1942, only to be caught off-guard and surrounded by the brilliance of the Red Army's Uranus counter-offensive. Ordered to stay put, Nazi high command tried to airlift in all the supplies the Sixth Army needed until a relief force could break through to them. Both operations failed, the airlift especially becoming a disaster.

In the city itself the fighting was almost indescribable as men fought for days for possession of a single house or even room. As winter took its icy hold, the trapped Germans began to starve, with soldiers dropping like flies from disease and malnutrition.

The Battle of Stalingrad became a byword for the horror and savagery of the war on the Russian Front. Hundreds of thousands of men from both sides fought for months amid the rubble of the shattered city, until the remnants of Sixth Army finally surrendered in January 1943. Almost 100,000 German troops trudged into captivity, the vast majority of whom would be dead within months. In the end only around 5,000 ever made it home alive from an army that once numbered 250,000. The German Army never recovered from the defeat, and for the German people there was a realisation that Stalingrad was a moment where the war turned against them.

Background to the battle

After the failure of Operation Barbarossa in the summer of 1941, the Germans had been stunned by Moscow's winter counter-offensive launched at the beginning of December. Adolf Hitler's 'stand and fight' order had saved the German Army from disintegrating in the snow, but in the dawn of the new year of 1942 the question on everyone's lips was what would Nazi Germany do next?

The answer was another offensive – Case Blue. Joseph Stalin expected the Germans to attack Moscow once again, but the Soviet dictator was wrong. According to Richard J Evans – professor of modern history at Cambridge University – Hitler was desperate for Soviet oil, believing that without it the Nazi war machine would grind to a halt as "the Third Reich remained woefully short of fuel during the war." The answer was the Soviet Union's Caucasus region, hundreds of kilometres from the current frontline but awash with oil.

Opposing forces

It was over 800km from the German Army's start line in the summer of 1942 to the oil-rich city of Grozny, now in modern-day Chechnya. To reach it Berlin realised it needed a huge offensive force that it simply couldn't muster alone after the disastrous losses of the winter. Its answer was to call on its allies to massively increase their contribution in the East. The results were astounding. The Italian contingent went from three divisions to an entire army: the 8th Army, also called the Armata Italiana in Russia or ARMIR. The Hungarians also sent a full army, the Second or Második Magyar Hadsereg, and the Romanians two: the Third and Fourth Armies. All massed

Top: *A German soldier at the River Don near Stalingrad on the lookout for enemy movements*

Above: *Fuel storage facilities erupt in flames after they were hit during the fighting*

Below: *Nazi troops take cover during their assault on the city. Both sides suffered heavy losses*

Images @ Alamy, Getty

An exhausted German soldier sits amid the ruins. One officer claimed: "We have fought for 15 days for a single house."

under the command of Gerd von Rundstedt's Heeresgruppe Süd (Army Group South); Case Blue would comprise over 1.5 million men, along with 1,500 panzers and the same number of aircraft. Facing them would be a Soviet force of roughly the same number of aircraft, but with double the number of tanks and a million more men.

Case Blue begins

After delays imposed by pre-emptive Red Army attacks at Kharkov and the Kerch peninsula, and the capture of the Crimea, Blue finally began on 28 June 1942. A hugely complex operation, in essence the plan was for the main force to break through the Soviet lines and head southeast into the Caucasus to seize the crucial oil fields; meanwhile its open, northern flank would be protected by a secondary force that would drive east and reach the River Volga. Stalingrad itself was barely mentioned in the orders for the offensive, with Hitler discounting it as a major objective.

At first successful, the Germans and their allies advanced across the steppe as they had the previous summer, defeating Soviet forces as they went, but without inflicting a knockout blow. Leading the push to the Volga was the German Sixth Army led by Friedrich Paulus, an officer described by his peer Heinz Guderian as "hard-working, original and talented" but also indecisive and "inclined to spend too much time… before issuing his orders". Nevertheless, by the beginning of August Paulus' Sixth Army had reached the outskirts of Stalingrad and was preparing to take it.

Sixth Army besieges Stalingrad

Beginning on 23 August with a major air raid from the Luftwaffe's Luftflotte IV, Sixth Army attacked the city from north and south. In a succession of nightmarish attritional battles over the next two months the Germans ground forward against determined Soviet resistance. In the south of the city the battlefield was dominated by an enormous concrete grain silo complex that towered over the surrounding area, and in the north a number of large factory complexes including the Red October and Barrikady works were fought over for weeks, with horrendous losses on both sides. Under the inspired leadership of their commander,

TIMELINE

28 JUNE 1942

OPERATION BLUE

In the summer of 1942 Adolf Hitler renewed his onslaught on the Soviet Union. His plan of attack, codenamed Operation Blue, had two major objectives. The first was to reach Stalingrad and the Volga River, blocking the transport of vital raw materials for the Soviet war effort; the second was to strike south into the Caucasus, capturing its oil fields. Oil from Grozny and Baku provided more than 80 percent of the Red Army's fuel, and the Führer believed that once these supplies were cut off its ability to resist would wither away. A full occupation of Stalingrad was not specified in Hitler's original directive – it was deemed sufficient to destroy the industrial capacity of the city.

For the attack in the south Hitler committed more than one million German soldiers and some 300,000 troops of his allies: Romanians, Italians and Hungarians (although many of the latter were of unreliable quality). German forces were divided into two groups: 'B' – which included the Sixth Army commanded by General Friedrich Paulus and the Fourth Panzer Army – would first advance on Stalingrad; then 'A' would push into the Caucusus.

Initially all went well as the Red Army disintegrated under the weight of the onslaught. By 17 July the Sixth Army had reached the Chir River, a tributary of the Don, clashing with units of the recently formed Soviet 62nd Amy (the beginning of the battle for Stalingrad). Six days later, an over-confident Führer made a substantial change of plan, deciding that Groups A and B would now advance simultaneously. This would prove a major mistake, disrupting the power and focus of the offensive. But in late July, German morale remained high – victory still seemed certain.

“BY THE BEGINNING OF AUGUST PAULUS’ SIXTH ARMY HAD REACHED THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY AND WAS PREPARING TO TAKE IT”

Vasily Chuikov, the Soviets refused to give an inch, expertly using the city’s ruins to their advantage and forcing the Germans to fight the sort of close-quarter struggle that their soldiers grew to hate. As one young officer called Lieutenant Reiner despairingly wrote: “We have fought for 15 days for a single house.”

The Germans used ever greater firepower to try and conquer the city; Stuka dive-bombers blasted Soviet positions while panzers and artillery fired endless shells into what was increasingly a moonscape of devastation. The respected author Jason Turner wrote in his 2012 book *Stalingrad Day by Day* that “the Germans expended an extraordinary amount of ammunition” which included an astonishing “911,000 artillery shells and 990,000 mortar rounds” during the fighting. Nevertheless the Soviets hung on, ferrying reinforcements over from the Volga’s eastern bank and devising new tactics in their so-called ‘street-fighting academies’. This included the widespread use of sniper teams, with sharpshooters like former Siberian shepherd Vasily Zaytsev becoming household names across the USSR.

For their part the Germans turned to specialist combat engineer battalions: the so-called pionieren, armed with MP40 sub-machine guns, grenades and explosive charges fought to prise the Soviets out of their last positions in the Barrikady and Dzerzhinsky tractor works and in the steep ravines on the banks for the Volga.

Operation Uranus

On the night of Wednesday 18 November, fresh snow began to fall on the already-freezing soldiers of the Romanian 3rd Army far to the northwest of Stalingrad on the River Don. The German liaison officer with the Romanian IV Corps at the time was a certain Lieutenant

***Above:** Russian sappers search for landmines, autumn 1942*

***Right:** Russian troops were under strict orders not to retreat as they faced down the German assault*

***Below:** Nazi tanks kick up clouds of dust as they advance towards Stalingrad*

Images © Alamy, Getty

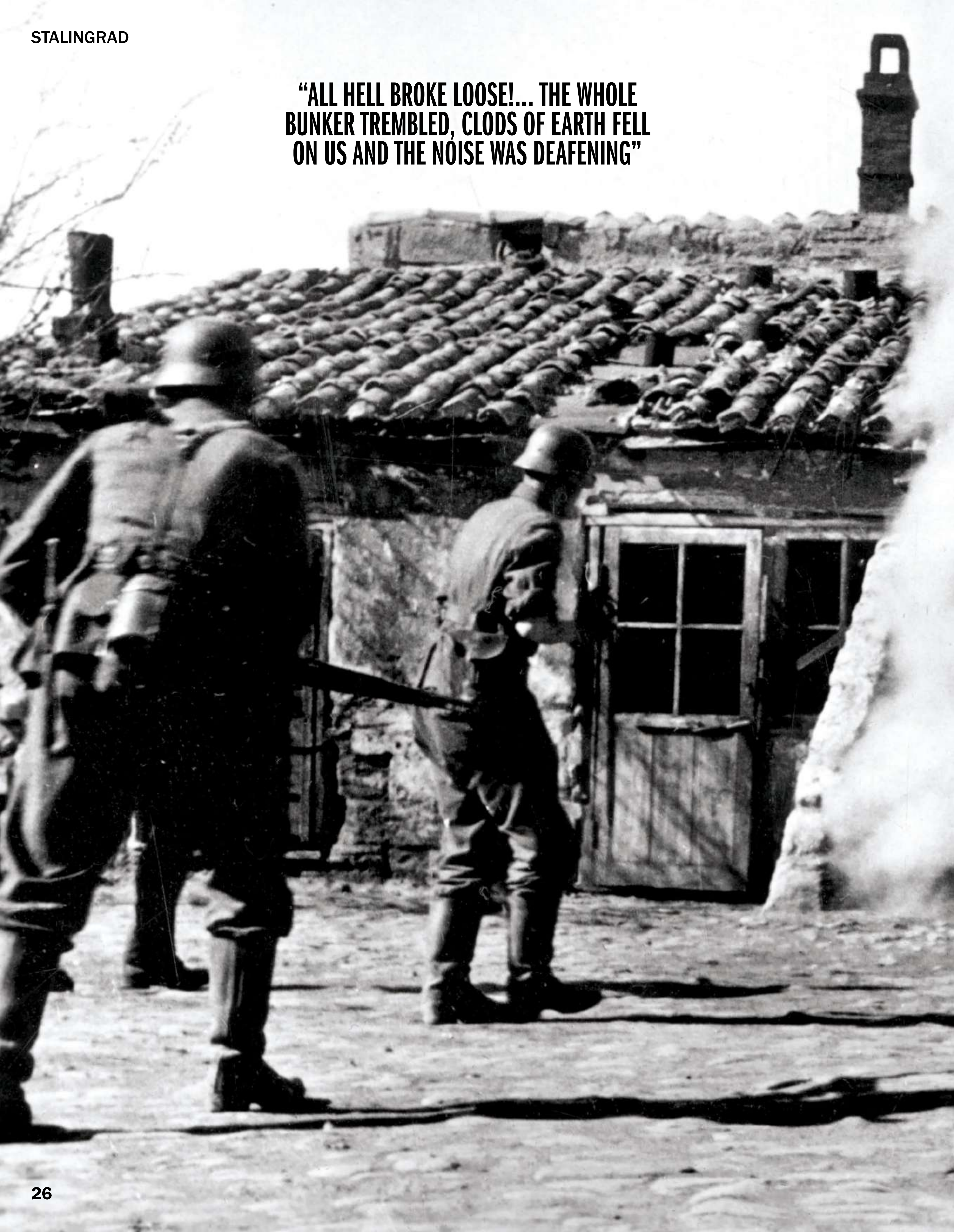
28 JULY

‘NOT A STEP BACK!’

Soviet leader Joseph Stalin had enjoyed his first military success when the Wehrmacht retreated from Moscow in December 1941. But the German front stabilised at Rzhev, 230km east of the Russian capital, in early spring and costly Red Army attacks failed to dislodge it. In the north, Leningrad remained under siege. In the south, Stalin suffered a major reversal after urging his commanders to attack at Kharkov in May in precisely the area the Germans were preparing their own offensive. More than 250,000 Red Army soldiers were killed or captured in an encirclement battle and the Soviet southern front was dangerously weakened. And as the Germans renewed their offensive, it was clear their professionalism and training still far surpassed that of Soviet forces hurriedly gathered to oppose them. As the Red Army retreated, a mood of pessimism swept the country. On 28 July 1942 Stalin countered it with his ‘Not a Step Back!’ order.

The decree, read out to members of the armed forces, warned no further retreat was possible. It was ruthlessly enforced: blocking detachments formed behind the front line had powers to shoot those retreating without permission, and punishment battalions dealt with those guilty of cowardice or ill-discipline. Many Red Army officers welcomed this. “It was harsh but inevitable,” said Soviet Lieutenant Anatoly Kozlov. “We had to stop the Germans. We knew we could not let them take Stalingrad.” Ordinary soldiers were less sure. “This order will change nothing – it has come too late. German strength is overwhelming,” one said. There was a growing sense that the fate of Stalingrad would be crucial to the outcome of the war.

Propaganda photo of Soviet sniper Anastasya Stepanova, during the summer of 1942



“ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE!... THE WHOLE BUNKER TREMBLED, CLODS OF EARTH FELL ON US AND THE NOISE WAS DEAFENING”

German soldiers attacking a village on the Donetsk front, June 1942

Image @ Alamy

Gerhard Stöck. A physically imposing figure, Stöck had won gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics in the Men's Javelin and bronze in the Shot, and now he was reporting to Sixth Army headquarters that he had intelligence of an imminent Red Army offensive in this area. The report was discounted, but just before dawn on 19 November some 3,500 Soviet artillery guns received the codeword Syrene and opened fire on the Romanians. The bombardment was horrific, as the German anti-tank gunner Henry Metelmann described in his memoir *Through Hell for Hitler*: "All hell broke loose!… the whole bunker trembled, clods of earth fell on us and the noise was deafening." This was the opening salvoes of Georgy Zhukov's Operation Uranus.

At first the ill-equipped Romanians fought back hard, their rifle fire flaying the attacking Soviet infantry, but when the Soviets threw in their T-34/76 tanks, the lack of Romanian anti-tank guns told and their lines broke. The following day it was the turn of the Romanian 4th Army to the south of Stalingrad to face an overwhelming Red Army assault. The German response was slow, both Paulus at Sixth Army and Armed Forces high command refusing to admit the Red Army was capable of carrying out the kind of deep-penetration operation that they themselves were masters of. Behind the front, the joint German-Romanian XXXXVIII Panzer Corps was in reserve, but in an almost unbelievable turn of events large numbers of its available panzers were immobile due to mice having gnawed through their electric cabling – their counterattack failed. Three days later the two jaws of the Soviet offensive met at Kalach on the River Don. The Germans in Stalingrad were now encircled.

***Above:** A German tank advances through the bombed out streets of Stalingrad*

The airlift

Inside the new Stalingrad Pocket were all of Sixth Army, elements of Fourth Panzer Army and several thousand Romanians from their 3rd Army. All in all some 250,000 German and allied troops were now trapped, and the question was should they attempt to break out or stand fast? Many of Paulus' senior commanders were adamant the Germans had to break out immediately when the Soviet encirclement was at its weakest, but Paulus wavered and in the end deferred to Hitler.

Stalingrad became a byword for the horror and savagery of the war

23 AUGUST

STALINGRAD IN FLAMES

By late July Paulus' Sixth Army had arrived at the River Don, and in early August it defeated Soviet forces around the bridging point at Kalach. On 19 August Paulus began moving some of his forces towards Stalingrad and four days later motorised units from his XIV Panzer Corps reached the Volga at Rynok, just north of the city. That same afternoon Wolfram von Richthofen's Luftflotte 4 unleashed a ferocious aerial bombardment, flying more than 1,600 sorties and dropping over 1,000 tons of explosives and incendiaries. Colonel General Andrey Yeremenko, head of the Stalingrad Front, wrote: "No-one will ever forget that day – it was a living nightmare. The sky was filled with columns of fiery smoke. The city seemed to have been struck by a terrible hurricane, which whirled it in the air, showering streets and squares with rubble."

The city's famous Barmaley Fountain, pictured here with burning buildings in the background after the Luftwaffe bombardment

14 SEPTEMBER

GERMANS BREAK INTO THE CITY

The relentless bombing continued. Towards the end of August Wolfram Richthofen flew over the stricken city – the sheer level of destruction impressed him. Flames leapt from huge oil storage containers and spilt oil was burning all across the surface of the river. "Stalingrad is destroyed," he noted dismissively, "and without further worthwhile targets." Richthofen knew that Stalin and Churchill had met for the first time in Moscow (in a summit from

HOW THE GERMAN ARMY FED ITSELF

***Above:** The Nazis used a fresh-food system rather than pre-packed rations*

Images @ Alamy, Getty

While countries such as Britain and the United States were developing the concept of easily stored and transported pre-packed rations, the Germans were still using a fresh-food system that relied overwhelmingly on local procurement and preparation of foodstuffs.

At the forefront of this system was the famed German Gulaschkanone and its horse-drawn, wood-burning stoves and massive cooking pots, as well as the bakery and butchery companies (kompanien) that were essential to all German divisions. The Gulaschkanone came in two main sizes: the larger version served anywhere between 125 and 225 men, and the smaller one half that number. Each field kitchen had a minimum of two trained cooks and a number of assistants commonly nicknamed küchenbullen (kitchen bulls).

German soldiers in the frontline would typically eat three meals a day starting with a cold breakfast of bread and jam, perhaps with some cheese and ham, all kept in the soldiers' brotbeutel (bread bag) haversack and washed down with a mug of coffee (by 1942 usually ersatz coffee made from acorns or chicory). Next would be the soldiers' main meal of the day, a Gulaschkanone-cooked hot meal comprising half of his daily rations. The evening meal was one-third his Portionsatz (daily ration), again centrally prepared, leaving the final one-sixth for the following morning's breakfast. Bread was the soldiers' main food, with every soldier receiving one 750g standard Army kommissbrot loaf per day, all freshly baked by the division's own bakery kompanie. On hearing they were surrounded, Sixth Army headquarters ordered a cut in the daily bread ration from 750g to 350g – less than half a loaf.

An elderly woman emerges from her basement after German soldiers enter the city, September 1942

"THE FÜHRER WAS DELIGHTED BY THE DEVASTATION INFLICTED ON STALIN'S CITY"

12-15 August) and remarked in his diary: "With a mixture of bluff and bravado Stalin will have declared to Churchill his absolute resolve to hold on at Stalingrad. Now he will have to prove it."

Richthofen relayed his impressions to Hitler. The Führer was delighted by the devastation inflicted on Stalin's city. He had grown impatient with Army Group A's slowing progress in the Caucasus and on 9 September dismissed its commander, Field Marshal Wilhelm List. Three days later Paulus was summoned to his headquarters at Vinnitsa in the Ukraine. Stalingrad was now seen as a prestige target, to be captured as quickly as possible.

Defence of the city depended on the 62nd Army and its newly appointed commander, Lieutenant General Vasily Chuikov. On the morning of 14 September the Germans attacked along the entire front. Air power was used to devastating effect. The 62nd Army war diary noted grimly that groups of 50 to 60 enemy planes were saturation bombing individual Soviet units then making way for advancing tanks and infantry. At noon two German divisions (the 71st and 295th) were ready to break into the city. Groups of machine gunners made their way through the gullies towards the Mamayev Kurgan, the key to the city. Red Army Private Suren Mirzoyan was on the hill: "From our vantage point on the slopes we could see the German war machine

Hermann Goering – without being in possession of the facts – told the dictator his Luftwaffe was able to supply the Pocket from the air and the decision was made that Paulus would sit tight and wait for relief.

A figure of 300 tons of supplies per day was set as the minimum needed by Sixth Army, but with the weather worsening and a lack of available transport aircraft for the airlift, that amount was only ever achieved on a handful of occasions, with the average being around a third of the requirement. Fuel and ammunition were the priority, but as Sixth Army's own stocks dried up the besieged Germans were increasingly immobile and forced to only fire back when directly attacked. As for food, at first Sixth Army relied on its reserves and the meat from the tens of thousands of horses the troops used to pull everything from artillery pieces to ammunition wagons and store carts.

Winter Storm – the relief attempt

The day after Uranus was launched, Hitler ordered the establishment of Army Group Don (Heeresgruppe Don) and put it under command of Erich von Manstein. Hitler instructed Manstein to take the offensive and relieve Sixth Army by breaking through to Stalingrad. On 12 December Manstein launched Operation Winter Storm (Unternehmen Wintergewitter), but the weakness of his own forces, coupled with the strength of Red Army resistance, reduced the initial advance to just 19km. At the same time the Soviets keep up the pressure on the rest of the southern front, pushing the Germans back in the north and on 16 December hitting the Italian 8th Army with Operation Little Saturn. In a matter of days the Italians collapsed, with thousands fleeing to the rear across the snow-covered steppe as the Germans struggled to plug the gap.

Manstein's offensive ground on, eventually getting to within 48km of the Pocket, but wasn't strong enough to go any further. The only option was for Paulus to break out and reach Army Group Don before it was too late. In preparation for just such a move Manstein had placed 800 cargo-laden trucks at the heart of his advance. On board was 3,000 tons of fuel and ammunition to get Paulus moving and fighting and bring the bulk of his army to safety, but it wasn't to be. In scenes reminiscent of the previous month when indecision had gripped him, Paulus once again refused to act and deferred to Hitler, loudly proclaiming his battered army was incapable of reaching Manstein unless he received significant resupply beforehand.

Defeat and surrender

With Manstein unable to advance any further and Paulus refusing to break out, the fate of Sixth Army was sealed. By Christmas Eve, Red Army pressure on Army Group Don forced it to retreat – Winter Storm was over. That same day the main airfield hub for the airlift operation, Tatsinskaya (nicknamed Tazi by the Germans), fell to the Red Army's 24th Tank Corps. With no option but to now fly even further to reach the beleaguered Sixth Army, the Luftwaffe transport fleet struggled to keep on supplying the city. The day after Tazi fell only seven tons of supplies were flown in.

Four days earlier Sixth Army had reported its first case of death from starvation – a soldier in Bernhard Steinmetz's 305 Infanterie Division. One German soldier inside the Pocket wrote that "we are suffering terribly from hunger, and they are only issuing one loaf of stale bread for five men".

Conditions inside the Pocket continued to deteriorate throughout the first week of January. Ammunition was in such short supply that the 5,000 or so remaining artillery guns were only allowed to fire with permission from their responsible regimental commander, while the few remaining panzers were more or less immobile from lack of fuel. Then, on 10 January, the Red Army launched Operation Ring to finally destroy the Pocket. Three days later the Soviets attacked the Hungarian

***Above, left:** Soviet troops take up positions in the rubble with a Maxim machinegun*

***Above, right:** The crew of a German armoured vehicle pose for a photo as the battle rages in the distance*

***Right:** German troops pick their way through the city ruins. By December around 250,000 were encircled*

Images © Alamy, Getty

moving into Stalingrad: columns of tanks, with their soldiers riding on top, followed by their motorised units. It resembled a terrible swarm of black insects, about to devour the city."

By early afternoon the Germans had taken the Kurgan and reached the Volga, putting the Central Ferry Crossing under fire. But Soviet reinforcements (lead elements of Rodimstev's 13th Guards) were brought in across the Volga, breaking the force of the attack and recapturing the Railway Station and Univermag Department Store. Somehow, the Red Army held on.

14 OCTOBER

HITLER INTERVENES

Over the next few weeks both sides brought more troops into Stalingrad. The clash turned into a battle of attrition, one which nullified German strengths in rapid movement and favoured newly devised Soviet tactics of deploying storm groups in street fighting. German morale waned and Red Army confidence grew. Hitler — losing patience with Paulus — demanded he take the city by 14 October. The Führer's attention was now focussed solely on Stalingrad. In a massive onslaught the Germans smashed through Soviet lines at the Tractor Factory, reaching the Volga, but lacked sufficient strength to dislodge the remaining defenders. A last attack on 11 November achieved limited success, with a further breakthrough behind the Barrikady Factory, but the Sixth Army was utterly spent.

Adolf Hitler came to view Stalingrad as a prestige target that was to be captured as soon as possible

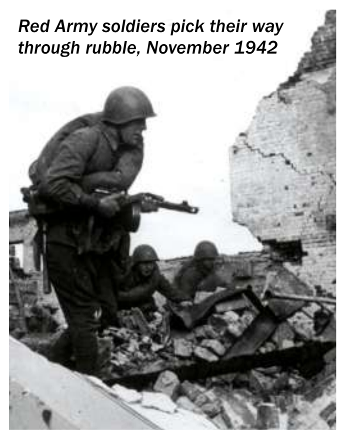
The crew of a Panzer IV keeps a lookout for the enemy during fighting around Volchansk

19 NOVEMBER

OPERATION URANUS

As fighting in Stalingrad intensified, Stalin's High Command saw the possibility of a dramatic counter attack. It continued to feed enough troops into the city to hold off the Germans but built up strength on its flanks. The German front was not along the Volga but the Don, further west, and from the bend in the Don River they were sending the last of their reserves to Stalingrad. As Soviet cartoons would later depict, it was as if they were putting their heads into a noose. To maintain their position, they relied on a narrow supply line, the rail link from Kalach, guarded by weaker armies of their allies the Romanians. On 19 November the Red Army struck towards this point in a two-pronged offensive codenamed Operation Uranus.

Red Army soldiers pick their way through rubble, November 1942



One force (the 5th Tank Army and 21st Army) attacked from the north, using bridgeheads already held on the Don River, and smashed through the Romanians opposing them. A day later a southern assault was also launched (by the 51st Army on the Kalmyk Steppe). By 23 November the two pincers had met near Kalach, completely surrounding the German Sixth Army in Stalingrad. Soviet Major Alexei Selenkov of the 21st Army wrote jubilantly: "We feel such pride in our new offensive. All the secrecy, all the careful preparation, has come to fruition. The Germans simply had no idea how many troops we had gathered."

> "WE FEEL SUCH PRIDE IN OUR NEW OFFENSIVE. ALL THE SECRECY, ALL THE CAREFUL PREPARATION, HAS COME TO FRUITION"

Red Army soldiers pictured with a captured Nazi banner in the winter of 1942-43.

For tens of thousands of POWs on both sides, captivity proved to be a death sentence

Wreck of a twin-engine Dornier Do-17 bomber in the ruins of Stalingrad, winter 1942-43

Over 55,000 German prisoners in Soviet camps would be dead by April 1943

24 DECEMBER

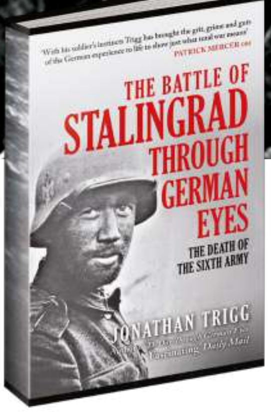
RELIEF EFFORT FAILS

More than 250,000 Germans (alongside some of their Romanian allies) were now trapped in Stalingrad. Some generals wanted to make an immediate breakout but Paulus hesitated, and then Hitler forbade any retreat from the city. The Führer promised a relief effort would be made by a force under Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, and in the interim the Sixth Army would be supplied by air. But the Luftwaffe was not able to get enough food, ammunition or fuel into the city and the German position steadily worsened. On 6 December Wehrmacht liaison officer Wilhelm Hosenfeld wrote: “The fighting at Stalingrad continues with unremitting ferocity – 15 of our divisions have been surrounded by the Bolsheviks. It seems that we have overestimated the capacity of our forces and underestimated those of our opponent – in fact, our real knowledge of Russian strength was misconceived or simply wrong.”

On 12 December Manstein launched his relief effort, Operation Winter Storm. Initially it made good progress, reaching the River Aksai some 50km west of Stalingrad, where it waited to see whether Paulus might break out of the city and join it. Such an operation would have been fraught with risk and almost certainly would have been vetoed by Hitler. But the collapse of the Italian Eighth Army – another weak German ally – forced Manstein to pull back on 24 December to cover his flank. As Christmas came and went, it was clear the plight of Paulus’ Sixth Army was hopeless.

Left: A snow-covered T-34 pictured in a recently liberated village close to Stalingrad, December 1942

Soviet troops enjoy a brief respite from fighting in the bitterly cold conditions



Jon Trigg's latest book *The Battle of Stalingrad Through German Eyes: The Death of the Sixth Army*, published by Amberley, is out now

Second Army and it quickly collapsed, causing further chaos on the German southern front. On 16 January Pitomnik airfield – the main base for the airlift within the Pocket – fell to the advancing Red Army.

The Soviets offered terms to the Sixth Army, but Hitler forbade capitulation, telling Paulus: "Sixth Army will hold their positions to the last man and the last round." In an effort to stiffen his resolve, Hitler promoted Paulus to generalfeldmarschall on 30 January, knowing that no German officer of that rank had ever surrendered. Paulus saw it for what it was – an invitation to commit suicide, but he refused. Instead, the following day he walked out of his headquarters in the basement of the Univermag department store and surrendered to the Soviets.

Aftermath

One of Paulus' staff officers – Wilhelm Adam – witnessed the final surrender and wrote in his diary: "My God, what a contrast between the two sides! The German soldiers, ragged and in light coats, looked like ghosts with hollow, unshaven cheeks. The Red Army soldiers looked fresh and wore warm winter uniforms… The march towards the Volga had ended."

Wilhelm Gereke – a young gunner in 71 Infanterie-Division – remembered how "some 250 of us were formed up as a column and under the guard of one sentry began to march south". Gereke was one of 91,000 survivors taken prisoner by the Red Army in the rubble of Stalingrad. Half would be dead by spring, a minority shot by their guards when they were unable to continue marching, but most from hunger and disease.

The Red Army – much like their German counterparts in 1941 – had done virtually nothing to prepare for an influx of prisoners of war, and the subsequent lack of food, shelter and medical care was a death sentence for thousands. Marching to a reception camp, one soldier recalled how "we set out with 1,200 men and only a tenth, about 120, were alive when we reached Beketovka". The noted historian Antony Beevor, in his book *Stalingrad*, quotes an NKVD secret police report that admitted 55,228 German POWs from the battle had died in Soviet camps by 15 April 1943. This was on top of those that had died in the fighting itself. The survivors were kept in Soviet forced labour camps, some even working on rebuilding the shattered city of Stalingrad, until only 5,000 remained alive. In a deal between the German and Soviet governments, those 5,000 were finally released and sent home in 1955-56.

> "SIXTH ARMY WILL HOLD THEIR POSITIONS TO THE LAST MAN AND THE LAST ROUND"

Unsurprisingly given the chaos in Sixth Army at the time, accurate figures for German losses in the battle are almost impossible to find, with a number of studies quoting wildly different numbers. The German historian Paul Carrell (pen name of the former SS officer Paul Karl Schmidt) insisted the number was 80,500, while the retired British Army Brigadier Peter Young opted for an incredible 280,000. A perhaps more reliable estimate of 162,000 killed is given by Brian Taylor in his book *Barbarossa to Berlin*.

As for Germany's allies, according to the latest figures from Stephen Walsh in his book *Stalingrad 1942-1943: The infernal Cauldron*, some 158,854 Romanians, 143,000 Hungarians and 114,520 Italians were killed, wounded or captured during the battle, effectively wiping out their countries' contributions to the war in Russia.

FURTHER READING

- ● Investigate Friedrich Paulus and the men of Sixth Army's wartime records further at Das Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg - Federal Archives-Military Archives Freiburg (BArch-MA) www.bundesarchiv.de
- ● Find out more about the German survivors of the Battle of Stalingrad in *Survivors of Stalingrad: Eyewitness Accounts from the Sixth Army, 1942-43* by Reinhold Busch (translated by Geoffrey Brooks)

Images © Alamy, Getty

10 JANUARY 1943

OPERATION SATURN

The Red Army now began to prepare Operation Saturn (or Ring) – the annihilation of all German forces at Stalingrad. It was launched on 10 January 1943, and on that day Soviet Lieutenant Mikhail Alekseyev wrote: "We are close to complete victory. The enemy will soon be destroyed. We will take vengeance for all the humiliation inflicted on us in the summer of 1942." German units – weakened by cold and hunger and short of ammunition – fought bravely but were soon falling back from the steppe and into the city.

Red Army soldiers celebrating victory in Stalingrad, 1943

2 FEBRUARY

THE FINAL SURRENDER

By 26 January attacking Red Army soldiers joined with their comrades inside Stalingrad. Hitler promoted Paulus to field marshal on 30 January but he surrendered to the Red Army a day later and the last fighting ceased on 2 February. The Red Army had won an extraordinary victory. Soviet Lieutenant Ivan Kaberov said simply: "Stalingrad is free! We first arrived at the city at a time of terrible fighting. Now there is silence. With a feeling of real pride we can say that we changed the fate of our Motherland and saved our people from Fascist slavery."

German POWs after the battle

Heroes of the Medal of Honor

RALPH PUCKETT

After capturing high ground at Hill 205 in Korea, US Rangers fought off repeated counterattacks. In the thick of the fighting, their commanding officer provided an extraordinary example of heroism

WORDS **MICHAEL E HASKEW**

Daylight was approaching and the familiar sting of freezing late-autumn temperatures was pervasive as 24-year-old 1st Lieutenant Ralph Puckett, commanding a detachment of 51 US Army Rangers, was handed a dangerous but necessary mission.

The Rangers were ordered to take high ground at Hill 205, overlooking the Chongchon River near the village of Unsan, and facilitate the advance of Task Force Dolvin and the 25th Infantry Division. The Korean War was in its fifth month, and the army of the communist North had invaded the South in an attempt to unify the government of the embattled peninsula by force. The United Nations, led by the US, had committed ground troops to stem the enemy tide, all the while wary of armed intervention from the neighbouring People's Republic of China.

The defenders of Hill 205 proved to be tough Chinese troops, and the fight to come was one of the earliest encounters between American and Chinese forces during the Korean War. In preparation for the attack, Puckett had pinpointed artillery fire coordinates to provide support, and the operation presented more than ordinary risk as the nearest American force was more than a mile distant. The advance would naturally expose the Rangers to being cut off, surrounded and annihilated.

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

Above: Colonel Ralph Puckett received the Medal of Honor 71 years after exhibiting extraordinary valour during the Korean War

A daylight assault

As soon as the soldiers of 8th Ranger Company, 8213th Army Unit, Eighth Army, stepped off they came under intense enemy mortar and machine-gun fire. One of several accompanying tanks was nearby and Puckett jumped on top the armoured vehicle, shouting: "Let's go!"

The attack was soon in trouble as the accurate defensive fire pinned down one Ranger platoon. Puckett leapt from the tank and in a moment of supreme courage sprinted into the open three successive times, drawing the Chinese machine gunners' attention away from the immobilised Rangers long enough for them to locate the source of the harassing fire and silence the position. Steadily, the Rangers moved forward, reaching and securing the summit of Hill 205 and consolidating their positions. They had arrived in Korea five weeks earlier, engaging in sweeps against pockets of enemy insurgents and helping to blunt a major communist offensive, but the coming hours would test their mettle well beyond their recent experience.

Crucible of counterattack

Puckett knew that it was only a matter of time before the Chinese mounted a counterattack to retake the high ground. He deployed his small Ranger contingent, already thinned by casualties from the earlier fighting, to its best defensive advantage.

Temperatures plunged to near zero as night came on, and then at 10pm the inevitable storm broke as huge numbers of Chinese soldiers followed an intense mortar barrage up the slope of Hill 205. The attack had been launched by an enemy battalion with an estimated strength of 500, outnumbering

> “I’M CERTAINLY HONOURED. THE PEOPLE WHO EARNED THAT MEDAL ARE THE RANGERS WHO DID MORE THAN I ASKED... THEY’RE THE ONES WHO DID THE JOB; THEY DID THE FIGHTING AND SUFFERED”
>
> **Colonel Ralph Puckett**

President Joe Biden awards Colonel Ralph Puckett the Medal of Honor during a White House ceremony in 2021

© Alamy

Puckett's command ten to one, but Ranger rifles and machine guns took a heavy toll on the Chinese and the assault was driven back.

However, it was only the beginning. For the next four hours the Rangers endured five more Chinese counterattacks, each one punctuated with heavy mortar blasts. Puckett was left with little choice on several occasions – calling in preregistered artillery fire at distances described as "danger close" – just metres from his own positions. The artillery support blasted huge gaps among the Chinese attackers and helped the Rangers cling to their hard-won high ground, but casualties were steadily mounting. A hot shard of steel from an exploding Chinese hand grenade had slashed into Puckett's thigh and he was bleeding profusely.

Puckett's command presence

Despite the danger, Puckett ignored his wound and was observed continually moving among his men, offering encouragement and directing their fire. He distributed vital ammunition at pressure points along the perimeter and kept only a single eight-round clip for the rifle he personally carried.

Puckett refused evacuation as his painful wound made movement difficult, and three more times he directly exposed himself to the enemy, and at one point a sniper took aim at the young officer. His Rangers, though inexperienced in combat and having trained for fewer than six weeks prior to arriving in Korea from Japan, spotted the concealed Chinese sniper and shot him dead.

Still the relentless enemy soldiers came on. The accurate American artillery that had previously stemmed the tide had noticeably slackened, and the sixth enemy assault breached the Rangers' defensive line. Hand-to-hand fighting ensued.

> "WITHOUT THE SACRIFICE OF VETERANS INCLUDING COLONEL PUCKETT AND THE EIGHTH ARMY RANGER COMPANY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY WE ENJOY TODAY COULDN'T HAVE BLOSSOMED IN KOREA"
>
> South Korean President Moon Jae-in

Suddenly, a pair of mortar rounds exploded near Puckett's foxhole. He was seriously wounded in the left arm, both feet and buttocks – yet he remained conscious and radioed to higher command that his Rangers had been overrun.

A Ranger rescue

As the exhausted and bloodied Rangers fell back, Puckett ordered his men to leave him behind. After regrouping, however, two intrepid Rangers were determined to rescue their wounded commander. Leaving him to the enemy would mean certain death.

As the Chinese surged toward the crest of Hill 205, Private First Class David L Pollock and Private First Class Billy G Walls made their move. Sprinting and crawling through withering fire toward their immobilised comrade, Pollock and Walls reached Puckett and gunned down three Chinese soldiers barely three metres from the stricken officer. They carried and dragged Puckett down the hillside to shelter. Soon after the artillery erupted once more, pounding the Chinese troops on top of Hill 205.

Puckett was evacuated and surgeons seriously considered amputating one of his mangled feet. He remained in hospital for a year, slowly recovering, and then returned to active duty. His heroism at Hill 205 was recognised initially with the Distinguished Service Cross, the US Army's second-highest commendation for valour.

The Ranger prototype

After his recovery, Puckett, a native of Tifton, Georgia, and a 1949 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, declined a medical discharge due to the severity of his wounds. He continued his military service as commander of the Mountain Ranger Division at the US Army Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia. He served with an army mission to Colombia and established the Ranger school for that nation's military, and also led 10th Special Forces Group Ranger teams in Germany.

Rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel amid the deepening US military involvement in Vietnam, Puckett took command of the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Airborne Infantry,

Chinese troops advance during their offensive in the autumn of 1950 that led to the fight at Hill 205 that November

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

© Alamy

101st Airborne Division in 1967. He deployed to Southeast Asia and received a second Distinguished Service Cross for heroism during a harrowing night of defensive fighting against elements of the North Vietnamese Army near the village of Chu Lai. His actions inspired those around him, and one Ranger recalled: "Word of Colonel Puckett's arrival spread like wildfire. We all stiffened up and felt that nothing bad could happen now because the Ranger was with us."

Participation in combat and outstanding contributions during his storied military career further earned Puckett two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars with "V" device for valour, five Purple Hearts, 10 Air Medals, the coveted Combat Infantryman's Badge with star, and many other decorations. He retired in 1971 after an illustrious career of 22 years.

After his military service concluded, Puckett remained active as programme director for Outward Bound and founded Discovery, both organisations that foster and encourage personal development, teamwork and leadership. He became a well-known author and speaker and was named the first honorary colonel of the 75th Ranger Regiment. In the early 1990s, he returned to the Columbus, Georgia, area with his wife, Jean, and resides there today.

Medal of Honor momentum

Through the years, Puckett became friends with John Lock, a retired US Army lieutenant colonel who had taken a special interest in Medal of Honor recommendations. Apparently, Puckett had been recommended for the award but the request had been withdrawn. Lock reviewed the circumstances surrounding Puckett's heroism decades earlier and advocated for an upgrade of the Distinguished Service Cross.

In November 2021, Puckett told the *Tifton Gazette* and *Valdosta Daily Times*, both Georgia newspapers: "He [Lock] believed I should have received it and he worked for nearly 20 years to get me upgraded to the Medal of Honor."

The tireless effort produced results, and a waiver was obtained by the Pentagon allowing Puckett to receive the Medal of Honor on 21 May 2021, during a White House ceremony hosted by President Joe Biden and attended by South Korean President Moon Jae-in. At the time of the ceremony, Puckett was 94 years old, and nearly 71 years had passed since that fateful day at Hill 205.

During the proceedings, President Joe Biden remarked: "He leads from the front. He leads by example. He leads with heart. He is a Ranger, and that's how Rangers lead – that's how you lead."

The honour is indicative of the fact that true heroism is not dimmed by the passage of time. And in the case of Colonel Ralph Puckett the Medal of Honor came late in life, but nevertheless – it came.

***Above:** As well as the Medal of Honor, Ralph Puckett received among other decorations two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars, and five Purple Hearts*

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

***Right:** Ralph Puckett greets US Army Rangers in this 2010 photo*

CONFESSIONS OF A POLISH EXECUTIONER

In the dark days of Nazi occupation one resistance member was tasked with assassinating Germans, and even his own countrymen who had become collaborators

WORDS **MAREK SOBIERALSKI**

Wartime resistance movements that are dedicated to fighting or undermining invaders are quickly created during times of conflict. People are compelled to act in ways they would never have imagined during times of peace and this was certainly the case during World War II, when these movements occurred in every occupied country. One of particular note was the Polish Resistance, and one of its soldiers, Stefan Dambski, was involved in carrying out sentences handed down by the Underground Courts from when he was aged just 16. Those who were accused included Polish collaborators, Germans, Ukrainians and, later, representatives of the puppet communist government.

Dambski's memoirs *Egzekutor* (*Executioner*) were written towards the end of his life and later published in Poland. They continue to cause controversy: on the one hand he's seen as an example of extreme sacrifice for his country, and on the other as a self-professed unemotional killer. Reading Dambski's recollections and reflections, we are compelled to question the price of wartime heroism and the limits of patriotism. We see that ultimately war damages or destroys anyone it touches on either side, and it is clear that over the years this anti-war message has only increased in significance.

The Poles go underground

The Polish Underground State was built in complete secrecy during the joint occupation by Germany and the USSR. Nowhere in occupied Europe was there an equally complex and effective organisation. Its most important task, alongside the organisation of underground activity, was to keep the Polish state functioning wherever possible. This included the maintenance of pre-war national institutions as well as making preparations to take back power once the war was eventually — hopefully — won.

Various resistance groups were formed as early as September 1939, with the Home Army (Armia Krajowa in Polish) becoming the dominant movement once it had absorbed most of the other Polish partisan and underground forces. The Armia Krajowa numbered around 400,000 in late 1943, making it the largest resistance organisation in Europe. Its numbers in 1944 included around 10,000 to 11,000 officers, 7,500 officers-in-training and 88,000 non-commissioned officers. These comprised pre-war officers and NCOs, graduates of underground courses, and elite operatives that were usually parachuted in from the West.

The basic organisational unit was a platoon, numbering 35 to 50 people, with a skeleton version of 16 to 25 individuals that was not mobilised. In February 1944, the Home Army had 6,287 regular and 2,613 skeleton operational platoons. These were organised into various specialised units that were responsible for justice and religion, intelligence and counterintelligence, operations and training, logistics, communication, information and propaganda, finances, and special operations. The Home Army was subordinate in the military chain of command to the commander-in-chief of the Polish government-in-exile in London.

The main operations of the Home Army included the gathering of intelligence: 48 percent of all reports received by the British Secret Services from continental Europe between 1939 and 1945 came from Polish sources.

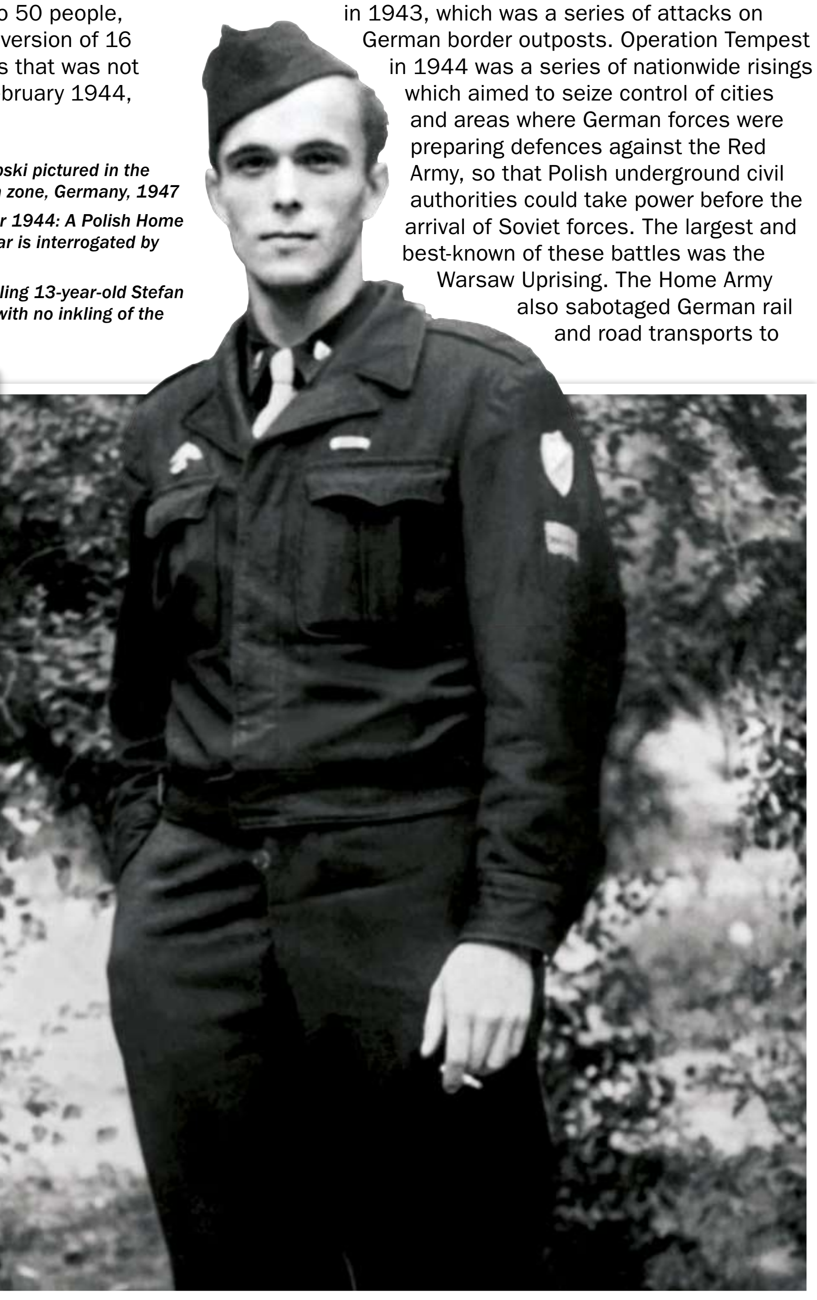
Other activities included the freeing of prisoners and hostages, as well as military or sabotage operations. Thousands of actions were undertaken, including the Zamosc Rising of 1942-43, where the Home Army sabotaged German plans to expel Poles under Generalplan Ost. Another was Operation Belt in 1943, which was a series of attacks on German border outposts. Operation Tempest in 1944 was a series of nationwide risings which aimed to seize control of cities and areas where German forces were preparing defences against the Red Army, so that Polish underground civil authorities could take power before the arrival of Soviet forces. The largest and best-known of these battles was the Warsaw Uprising. The Home Army also sabotaged German rail and road transports to

Right: *Stefan Dambski pictured in the western occupation zone, Germany, 1947*

Below, left: *October 1944: A Polish Home Army prisoner of war is interrogated by German officers*

Bottom, left: *A smiling 13-year-old Stefan Dambski in 1938, with no inkling of the upcoming war*

© Getty



Stefan Dambski photos from the family collection / KARTA Foundation

The remains of the Polish Home Army being led into captivity after the Warsaw Uprising, 1944

Three young Home Army soldiers from "Miotła" Battalion during the Warsaw Uprising, 2 September 1944

Images © Alamy

The Polish wz.35 Vis single action semi-automatic pistol was adopted as the standard handgun of the Polish Army

the Eastern Front in the Soviet Union, with an eighth of all German transports destroyed or substantially delayed.

Home Army assassin

The Home Army also carried out dozens of attacks on senior Nazi commanders in Poland. A well-known one was Operation Bürkl, where Franz Bürkl – an SS-Oberscharführer, Gestapo officer and commandant of the Pawiak prison – was assassinated on 7 September 1943. Another example was the operation where Franz Kutschera – an SS-Brigadeführer and police leader of the Warsaw District – was assassinated on 1 February 1944.

An activity that is perhaps broached less often is the fact that the Home Army also had to deal with Polish collaborators and traitors, on whom they carried out sentences that were handed down by the Underground Courts. The Home Army published a leaflet in 1943 which stated: "Every Pole is obligated to help those in hiding. Those who refuse them aid will be punished on the basis of… treason to the Polish Nation." People who blackmailed Jews in hiding or threatened the Poles who aided them were executed by the Home Army. An Information Bulletin article from 2 September 1943 cites the example of Jan Grabiec, who was executed for blackmailing residents of villages that were sheltering Jews.

Dambski was just 14 when the Second World War broke out, and two years later he joined a diversionary detachment of the Home Army in Rzeszów in southern Poland. He quickly became bored with what he considered mundane assignments – such as delivering messages – that were given to members of such a young age, and he was keen to undertake more interesting work.

He saw his chance when he found out that one of his friends was informing on the Home Army to the Gestapo, and suggested to his superior that they shouldn't bother with the usual liquidation team. As Dambski wrote: "I immediately saw a great opportunity. I told 'Stach' that I had a Polish carbine hidden under my bed and asked him to let me finish Jurek off… Somehow it never occurred to me that in a few hours I was to shoot a man, that I had to kill not only a human being, but also my friend, with whom many bottles of moonshine had been drunk." But his plan didn't sit well with his superiors due to his young age and they did not initially agree to the request. However, they eventually relented and Dambski invited the unwitting spy for a few drinks. At one point Dambski showed his guest his carbine and suggested they go hunting in a nearby forest, which he agreed to. A formality of any sentence was that the accused would have the verdict of the Court read to them before it was carried out, but Dambski forgot to do this and simply shot the informant dead from close range.

His superiors decided that if he were to continue carrying out such tasks, then he should have some training. He undertook a Home Army 'execution platoon' course in the forests near Rzeszów, where he learned how to execute individuals using a pistol, as these were most suitable for this type of work.

Above: *Members of the Polish Home Army, wearing captured German uniforms, with a red and white arm band signifying the Polish colours, cleaning their rifles*

One of his favourites was the Polish-made Vis semi-automatic pistol, as its size enabled it to be concealed easily and then quickly drawn and used before his foe had any idea of what was going on.

During this time, someone had run up from a nearby village and told them that one of their number had just been arrested by the Germans for being in the possession of a quantity of meat. They quickly made their way to the village and managed to free the hostage, as well as capture an important prisoner. This individual was responsible for setting quotas in the area for how much food or livestock the Germans would take from the Polish producers and farmers. The Home Army sent a message to the authorities that he was safe and well in their care. They assured them that no harm would come to him unless the Germans took reprisals against the local population, and that they would release him after six months if things remained peaceful during this time. The Germans surprisingly agreed to this and the locals were spared reprisals, although the prisoner was secretly executed on the same day as the Poles sent their message to the occupiers.

Partisan life

Daily life in a partisan unit, although hard at times, had its advantages. Dambski stated that he appreciated the fact that he didn't have to go to school or undertake physical work. Food was provided, and there was no chance of becoming bored. And of course there was always alcohol. "At the end of the evening I demolished half a bottle of moonshine and, like a pig, fell asleep in my clothes, waiting for a better tomorrow," he wrote, adding: "I was nothing in civilian life, and here in the Home Army I carried a large gun under my belt and acted like I was a big deal… I have always been a perfectionist in all my endeavors, be it in sports or at work. I've always tried to be at the forefront. And I was no different in the Home Army. I treated my tasks seriously, and – being a specialist in executing people – I carried out the sentences that were ordered without emotion, with stoic calm, glad that I was needed."

Taking someone's life, in any circumstance, for most people, is very difficult, but some clearly find it easier than others. As Dambski recollected: "At one time, I was the pride of the entire unit. Since it made no difference to me if I lived, I did not care at all if others lived. I shot at people like at a target during training, without any emotion. I liked to see the terrified faces before liquidation… My dreams had come true; I was unscrupulous… I was worse than the vilest animal, and at the very bottom of the human swamp. And yet I was a typical Home Army soldier. I was a hero on whose chest was pinned the Cross of Valor after the war, one of four issued for the entire unit."

The targets of the Home Army execution squads were varied. During the autumn of 1943 Dambski received an order to eliminate a certain Volksdeutsche (a person whose language and culture had German origins but who did not hold German citizenship) in Rzeszów. Unfortunately, when he pulled the trigger of his pistol he just heard an empty click and it didn't go off. The target then quickly pulled out his own weapon and started firing it at the fleeing Dambski, who (ironically) was saved by an unwitting passing German officer who shot his assailant. The officer had assumed that he must be some Home Army operative.

As the war progressed the German occupiers were replaced by the Soviets, but the work of the Home Army didn't end. These new occupiers and their collaborators were

"BEING A SPECIALIST IN EXECUTING PEOPLE I CARRIED OUT THE SENTENCES THAT WERE ORDERED WITHOUT EMOTION, WITH STOIC CALM, GLAD THAT I WAS NEEDED"

Above: *A group of Polish Home Army fighters before an attack, towards the end of the Second World War*

Left: *Polish Home Army soldier on a barricade, 1944*

Images © Alamy

now the targets, as they would often create a worse hell for Polish civilians than even the Nazi invaders had done. By pure chance, Dambski found one of them sleeping under a tree while riding his bicycle somewhere outside Rzeszów. He quietly dismounted his bike and carefully tiptoed over to the sleeping Russian sergeant. Convinced that he was indeed fast asleep, Dambski pulled a long nail from his pocket and slammed its full length into the sleeping Russian's head, before jumping back on his bike and calmly continuing his journey.

Some of his most shocking recollections concern the brutal slaughter of Poles by Ukrainians during the Volhynian and Eastern Galician massacres from 1943 to 1945 and the revenge killings of Ukrainians by Poles. "The attacks by Ukrainians on Polish villages were terrible… They rarely used a pistol or automatic rifle, most of the victims fell from their knives or axes… Women and children were taken just as the men. They took Polish babies by the feet and smashed their little heads against the wall," wrote Dambski. He goes on to detail how Polish retaliation was no less brutal: "Half-conscious Strong, an old cutler from Pasiek in Lviv, threw himself at the petrified Ukrainians and cut them to pieces. With incredible skill, he ripped open their bellies or slit their throats…"

One moment of hesitation for Dambski occurred when he was tasked with executing a former friend and comrade in arms who had switched sides and joined the communist militia. As that individual knew who in the local area was a member of the Home Army, he was a huge danger and risk to the organisation, which was being severely repressed by the new occupiers and their helpers. During that action Dambski and his group successfully attacked the police station, apprehended three traitor militiamen as prisoners and led them outside for execution. As they did so the prisoners tried to escape but were all shot and wounded in the attempt. As Dambski approached his former friend, he heard him utter the words "Stefan, finish me off", after which Dambski's eyes suddenly filled with tears and his hands started trembling. He wasn't able to carry out the execution and had to ask a colleague to do it instead.

"AS THE WAR PROGRESSED THE GERMAN OCCUPIERS WERE REPLACED BY THE SOVIETS, BUT THE WORK OF THE HOME ARMY DIDN'T END"

Dambski's partisan experience ended in 1945 when the new authorities became much more interested in the 19-year-old. The command decided to transfer him to the West, where he first joined one of the US Guard companies that was formed by the US Army in order to protect military installations, warehouses, prison camps, civilian representatives or army officers, in occupied Europe.

Dambski eventually settled in the United States and it was there that he started to think seriously about what he had done during his service in the Home Army. He was clearly an extreme case, as most Home Army soldiers didn't have such feelings or reactions when killing another human being. He concluded that the fact that he was brought up without a mother had a huge influence and impact on his value system. Add to that the environment and society where he found himself, which had intensively drummed into him an aggressive, ruthless love of his country.

As he wrote: "For years after the end of the war, I tried to analyze myself and ultimately found that I had reached this animal-like state mainly through my upbringing during my youth – in an atmosphere of patriotic extremism. When you instil into a child from the cradle onwards how important the Motherland is, that you must fight your enemy until victory or death, then that child – when it grows up – will fight when ordered, and shoot at anyone who has different views, or is of a different nationality. Writing these recollections today, I try to justify my actions and of those people like me, when it comes to the huge wrongs we did to the human race." In 1993 Dambski died by his own hand, while terminally ill with cancer.

Photographs of Stefan Dambski and excerpts from his memoirs, courtesy of the KARTA Foundation in Poland.

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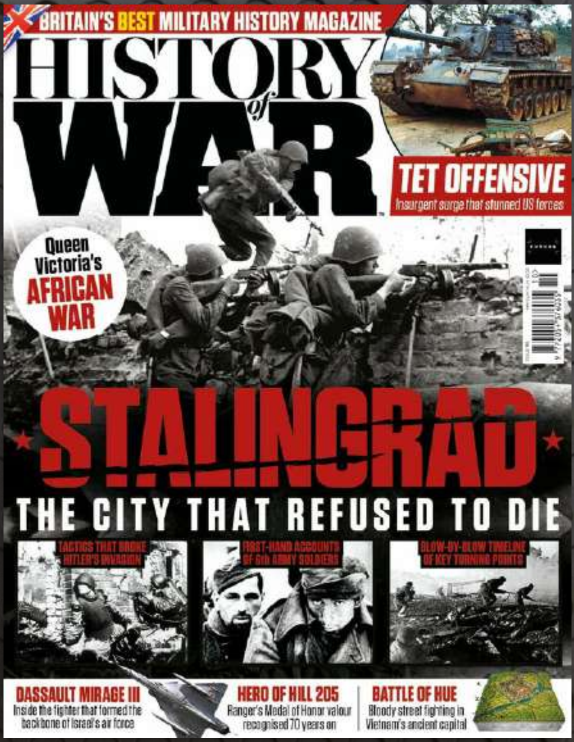
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THE TET OFFENSIVE

It may have been a colossal military failure, but in many ways this campaign marked the turning point of the Vietnam War

WORDS **HARETH AL BUSTANI**

In 1967, after a year of heavy losses, Ho Chi Minh and General Giap began to fear that North Vietnamese morale would soon begin to fracture. The two decided on a dramatic shift of policy, moving away from protracted, limited warfare towards planning one great decisive battle. Up until now, the communists had been fighting on three fronts: maintaining military pressure on the ground, mobilising support from the people of South Vietnam and, crucially, eroding American public approval for US involvement.

They now believed it was time to concentrate their forces and seize swathes of strategic positions all across South Vietnam. This would, in turn, trigger a widespread general uprising against the South Vietnamese regime while simultaneously revealing to the US that the war was unwinnable, triggering a withdrawal.

In the United States, the anti-war movement was reaching new heights, with 30,000 protestors chanting "Hey, hey LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?" outside the White House – loud enough for President Lyndon B Johnson's family to hear. With an election year coming up, Johnson was desperate to reassure the public that the war would soon be won. Convinced the communists were one heavy loss from defeat, Johnson and General Westmoreland went on a propaganda media tour, asserting that the communists were too exhausted to launch any further offensive actions and that the end was in sight.

North Vietnam spent the next six months preparing for its grand, decisive strike, luring American forces into the Vietnamese hinterlands with an assault on Dak To and a concentration of forces around Khe Sanh. As the American lines spread thinner, the communists began scattering 84,000 Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) fighters through safe houses across all the major cities in South Vietnam. Weapons were smuggled across the Cambodian border, the tunnels of Cu Chi and the Iron Triangle and transported to the guerrilla fighters further south. Women and children carried these weapons through checkpoints, hiding them in agricultural produce or coffins.

Instead of traditional hit-and-run style attacks, Giap organised his army into several small units, instructing them to take strategic sites by surprise and hold them until reinforcements arrived. In Saigon, 35 battalions would split up and capture the Presidential Palace, the US Embassy, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, and the headquarters of both the Vietnamese Navy and the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff. Another group would also break into the National Broadcasting Station and play a speech by Ho Chi Minh announcing the liberation of Saigon and a call for a general uprising across the South.

In the build-up to the attack, the Viet Cong (VC) staged several trial runs, attacking small holdings and attempting to hold them before retreating. US forces knew this was unusual and even captured documents outlining plans for a general assault across the South, with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff speculating "there may be a communist thrust similar to the desperate effort of the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge". However, Giap had made sure each

"THE COMMUNISTS PICKED THE ONE DATE NO ONE WOULD EVER EXPECT: THE TET LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVAL"

Despite being repulsed, the attack on Saigon was a strike at the very heart of American imperial power in Vietnam

© Getty

individual unit only received instructions relating to their direct tasks, so the Americans were unable to piece together the bigger picture.

Although the US did speed up troop movements to Vietnam, it did not believe the communists were capable of launching a massive assault. More importantly, the military had no idea when any such attack might take place. Keenly aware of the importance of the element of surprise, the communists picked the one date no one would ever expect: the Tet Lunar New Year Festival. As Tet drew nearer, both sides agreed to a ceasefire, and the Americans and ARVN believed the communists would never risk the public fallout of violating the most cherished of Vietnamese occasions.

As the US became increasingly overstretched, spreading military assets across the DMZ, Westmoreland grew anxious; he wanted to limit the Tet truce from the agreed week to just 24 hours. At the last minute, South Vietnam's President Thieu compromised, cutting it down to 36 hours.

Although most of the pieces were already in place, this left the VC and NVA with an incredibly tight window to catch their enemy off guard. The ceasefire would begin on the evening of 29 January – before the communists had time to mobilise their reinforcements. In anticipation of the event, Westmoreland placed his troops on maximum alert, with special focus on major strategic military, logistical and population centres.

On the evening of 29 January, as South Vietnam embraced the year of the monkey, revellers swarmed the streets beneath the brilliant bursts of traditional fire crackers. Suddenly, from the highlands of Pleiku to the coast of Danang, deep into the Mekong Delta down south, fireworks gave way to gunfire and explosions. Hours later, a wave of chaos swept through the capital of Saigon as the VC and NVA spilled out of their safe houses towards their targets.

“THEY FOLLOWED ORDERS AND HUNKERED DOWN, WAITING FOR MUCH-NEEDED REINFORCEMENTS THAT WOULD NEVER ARRIVE”

Dressed as South Vietnamese riot police, one group killed the guards outside the radio station and stormed through, riddling sleeping ARVN paratroopers with machine-gun fire. Armed with the tape of Ho Chi Minh and diagrams of the layout, they were horrified to learn the ARVN had already used a kill switch to take the power out. Meanwhile, lacking appropriate manpower, the assaults on the navy headquarters and Joint General Staff were rapidly repelled. Elsewhere, the Presidential Palace defences were far too strong, forcing the attackers to a nearby building, where 32 communists would perish in a lengthy last-ditch stand.

Despite these failures the Americans on the ground were overwhelmed as reports continued to pour in of attacks bouncing around, according to General Weyand, like a “pinball machine”. At the American Embassy, 19 VC sappers blew a hole in the compound walls and darted through only to be wiped out in an arduous six-hour gunfight. Another group of sappers managed to breach the JGS compound but, once again, rather than pressing on they followed orders and hunkered down, waiting for much-needed reinforcements that would never arrive.

Although the attacks across Saigon were decisively beaten back, the Western press had begun reporting it as soon as the violence broke out. One AP bulletin, which made it into all of the first-edition newspapers on the east coast of the US, read: “The Vietcong seized part of the US Embassy in Saigon early Wednesday... Communist commandos penetrated the supposedly attack-proof building in the climax of a combined artillery and guerrilla assault that brought limited warfare to Saigon itself.” After the firefight was over, one *Washington Post* reporter described their bewilderment at Westmoreland “standing in the ruins and saying everything was great”.

Meanwhile, 24km north of Saigon was the Long Binh command and logistical complex, which stretched out towards the sprawling Bien Hoa Air Base. After steady rocket and mortar fire, the communists launched a co-ordinated ground attack but were mowed down by American machine guns. In the northeast, as the 1-5 Armored Cavalry, 9th Infantry, made

By the time Johnson announced his withdrawal from the presidential race in March, 4,000 Americans had been killed in the Tet Offensive

In the defence of Khe Sanh, the US dropped the equivalent of ten Hiroshimas' worth of bombs on the North Vietnamese attackers

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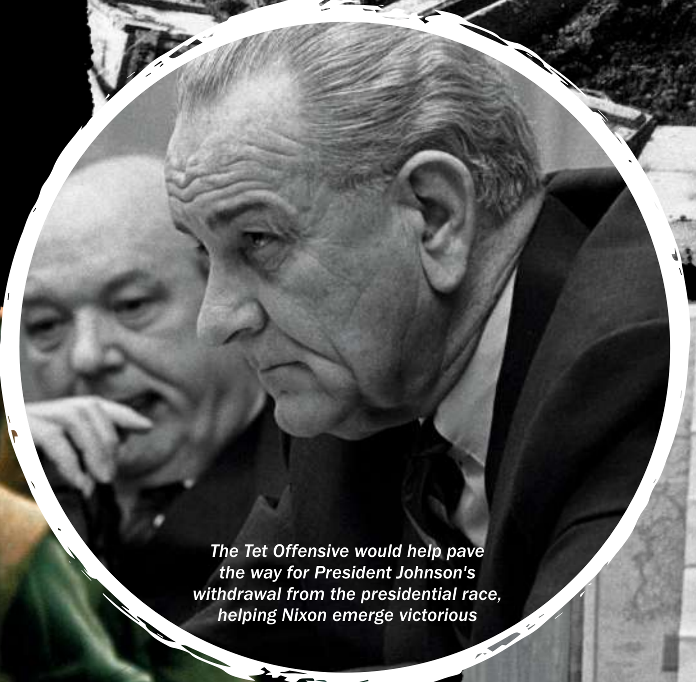
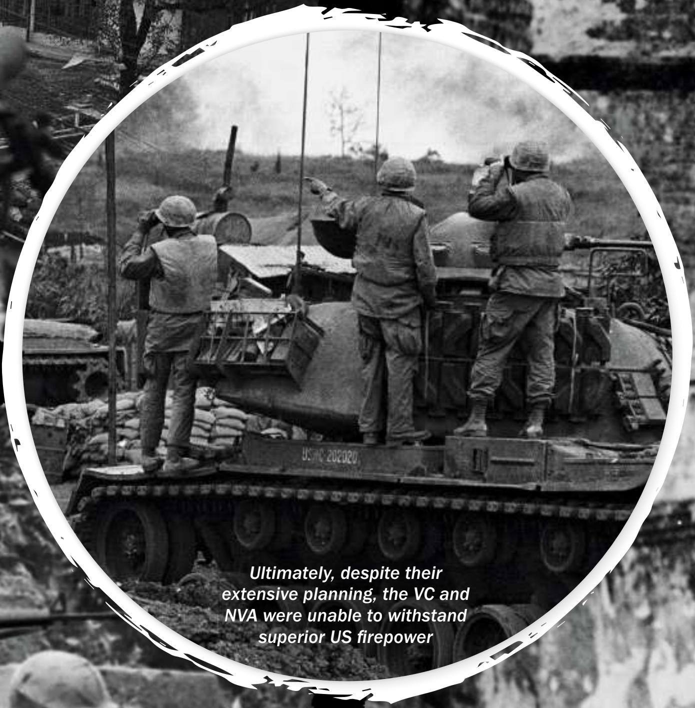


The Tet Offensive would help pave the way for President Johnson's withdrawal from the presidential race, helping Nixon emerge victorious

Although the US was expecting a major VC and NVA attack, they never thought it would break out during Tet celebrations

The battle for Hue was a brutal, protracted engagement, with the opposing sides fighting house to house

It's estimated that approximately 14,000 civilians were killed during the Tet Offensive



Ultimately, despite their extensive planning, the VC and NVA were unable to withstand superior US firepower

US Marines crouch behind a wall during the Tet Offensive

its way towards Long Binh it broke through an ambush only to have a bridge blown up beneath it. While its ACAVs were able to ford the stream, it had to abandon its tanks and press on.

The Cavalry forced its way through thick crowds of people in the city of Bien Hoa only to discover it was surrounded by VC troops. After an almighty firefight, the squadron commander directed the Cavalry through a maze of streets from his helicopter, guiding them around a huge VC ambush – allowing them to smash through the rear just in time to relieve the air base. On 1 February, when one of the Cavalry officers heard that five more squadrons were converging on Saigon, he celebrated: "We knew that our enemy could never match our mobility, flexibility and manpower."

The pattern seen in Saigon, where attackers made initial shock gains only to be beaten back, was echoed across the country. The only exception was the old imperial capital city of Hue, which was split by a river; the new town occupied the south bank and the old walled Citadel the north. On 31 January, 8,000 NVA troops poured in and seized the Citadel, as well as sections of the new city. With some of the 1st ARVN trapped in the Citadel, and 200 Americans and Australians in the new city's MACV compound, the fighting was fierce. After initially underestimating the scale of the attack, the Marine command at Phu Bai called in reinforcements to encircle and cut off the communist supply lines.

Despite some relief, Hue proved exceptionally difficult to reclaim and a gruelling battle of attrition ground its way through the narrow city streets. During their stay, the communists took the opportunity to indoctrinate and propagandise as much as they could. As fighting unfolded over the next month, civilians found themselves trapped in a dire situation, with the communists torturing and executing thousands suspected of being sympathetic to the Southern regime.

"THE PATTERN SEEN IN SAIGON, WHERE ATTACKERS MADE INITIAL SHOCK GAINS ONLY TO BE BEATEN BACK, WAS ECHOED ACROSS THE COUNTRY"

The urban setting of Hue neutralised the United States' two main advantages: superior firepower and mobility. The battle descended into house-to-house urban combat, where the defenders turned blocks into virtual fortresses, firing machine guns from the windows while launching spontaneous counter-attacks using back alleys.

Some of the American tanks went through numerous crews every day, repeatedly rushing and withdrawing under heavy fire, followed

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by infantry in flak vests. Snipers on either side duelled it out, providing cover for their footsoldiers in the streets, while Jeeps zoomed about offering drive-by bursts of support fire. Both sides had to wear gas masks as they fired tear gas at one another.

Keen to break the deadlock, the United States received ARVN permission to bring in the big guns and unleashed a storm of artillery on the VC positions, razing much of the city to the ground. By the time they recaptured the Citadel on 24 February, 116,000 of Hue's 140,000 residents were left homeless. While the US lost 216 men and the ARVN 384, 5,000 NVA and VC fighters were killed in the battle.

Of the 84,000 communist troops that took part in the Tet Offensive, almost 58,000 were killed compared to just 4,000 Americans and 5,000 South Vietnamese soldiers. From a military perspective, it was a catastrophic strategic defeat, forcing the cadres to abandon long-held territory to regroup. The ARVN, meanwhile, had performed above all expectations, and Westmoreland truly believed that with a little more pressure the war could now be won.

With Westmoreland's blessing, General Wheeler requested a call up of 206,000 more troops in order to deter any future attacks and maintain momentum. However, while Westmoreland had considered it a magnificent victory, Wheeler's request sent a very different message. Despite the impressive body counts, the US had nothing to show for it. On the contrary, given how much Johnson and Westmoreland had emphasised that the VC and NVA were on their knees, the scale and intensity of the Tet Offensive utterly shocked the American public.

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who was about to resign, advised President Johnson to reject the request for more troops, which would exact a heavy human and financial toll on the US and jeopardise the future of Johnson's Great Society. Well into an election year, Johnson was in an impossible situation: he did not want to be seen as throwing the war but doubling the number of troops would send the message that it was anything but won. When the request was leaked to the public it did little to assuage the growing American concerns that the country's leaders were either utterly incompetent or lying to them.

On 13 March, Johnson denied the request, instead approving 24,200 army troops alongside 6,000 Air Force and support servicemen. Furthermore, at the end of the month, with Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy both running on peace platforms, the president delivered a shocking speech, signalling the ultimate personal defeat: "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president." The US had won the Tet Offensive and yet still seemed, to the American public, to be losing war. The tide had turned.

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HUE, SOUTH VIETNAM 31 JANUARY – 2 MARCH 1968

THE BATTLE OF HUE

In 1968, as popular support for the US invasion of Vietnam faded, communist forces captured the city of Hue in just two hours. They only held it for a few weeks but it was a turning point in the war, and American history

WORDS **HARETH AL BUSTANI**

Viet Cong soldiers fix bayonets and go into battle on the outskirts of Hue during the Tet Offensive

OPPOSING FORCES

US ARMY & SOUTH VIETNAMESE	VS	NORTH VIETNAMESE & VIET CONG
COMMANDER Gen. Ngo Quang Truong, Col. Stanley Hughes		**LEADERS** Ho Chi Minh, Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap
TROOPS c.15,000		**TROOPS** c.10,000

In 1967, the American invasion of Vietnam had reached a painful juncture for both sides. While Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara resigned, insisting the war could not be won, General William Westmoreland called for escalation, insisting that if the US sent an additional 200,000 troops then victory would soon be at hand.

However, according to Andrew Wiest's *The Vietnam War 1956-1975:* "In the United States the slow progress of the war in Vietnam and numerous revelations about government dishonesty with regard to the conflict combined seriously to erode public support for the war."

Meanwhile, the communist leaders Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap were also concerned about morale and devised a dramatic shift in strategy. Keen to break the deadlock and deal the US and its southern allies a critical blow, they shifted away from a limited but protracted campaign of attrition to a grand decisive campaign. Hoping to improve their military position, inspire revolt in South Vietnam and erode the already dwindling American approval for the war, General Pham Hung devised the Tet Offensive: a series of surprise attacks to be launched during the Tet Lunar New Year cease fire.

In late 1967, Wiest describes how the Viet Cong "lured US forces into the Vietnamese hinterlands through a series of attacks and buildups", before launching the offensive on 31 January 1968, simultaneously attacking all the major cities of South Vietnam.

Among those targeted was the historic Imperial City of Hue, which writer James Arnold describes as "the most venerated place in Vietnam". He adds: "The war had not touched Hue, yet it was more than a symbolic target. A rail and highway bridge crossed the Perfume River and continued north. They served as the main land supply routes for the growing number of Allied troops along the DMZ. Hue also served as a major unloading point for waterborne supplies that were brought from Da Nang on the coast."

Author Mark Bowden explains why the city had been largely left untouched: "Ho knew that Hue's Catholics, Buddhists and intellectuals, while not necessarily friendly to his cause, were also cool to [President] Thieu's government. The president had the backing of his fellow Catholics, but few others." He continues: "Buddhists and most intellectuals in Hue, even those opposed to Ho, saw Thieu and his government as a creation of the United States. So the city was a tough nut for both

© Getty

the North and the South. It had largely been left alone."

Former US Army historian Erik Villard clarifies that while the city had "so far escaped the worst ravages of war", it had been mortared from time to time and been occasionally targeted by saboteurs from the Hue City Sapper Unit. "Nonetheless," he states, "considering the city's cultural and intellectual importance to the Vietnamese people – as well as its political status as the capital of Thua Thien Province – it was only a matter of time before the communists tried to make it their prize".

Villard cites a Buddhist legend, which claims the city had sprung to life as a lotus flower blossoming from a puddle of mud; symbolic of the Buddha's journey towards enlightenment: "In more prosaic terms, the city sat on a bend of the Perfume River, seven kilometres southwest of the South China Sea and was divided by the river into two sections." On the North bank stood the six-square-kilometre Citadel, a fortress built in the early 19th century at the behest of the royal family.

"Modelled after the Forbidden City in Beijing, the Vauban-style fortress was built in the shape of a diamond, with its four corners pointing to the cardinal directions of the compass. Stone walls up to eight metres high and several metres thick encircled the city, as did a wide moat filled with water," says Villard.

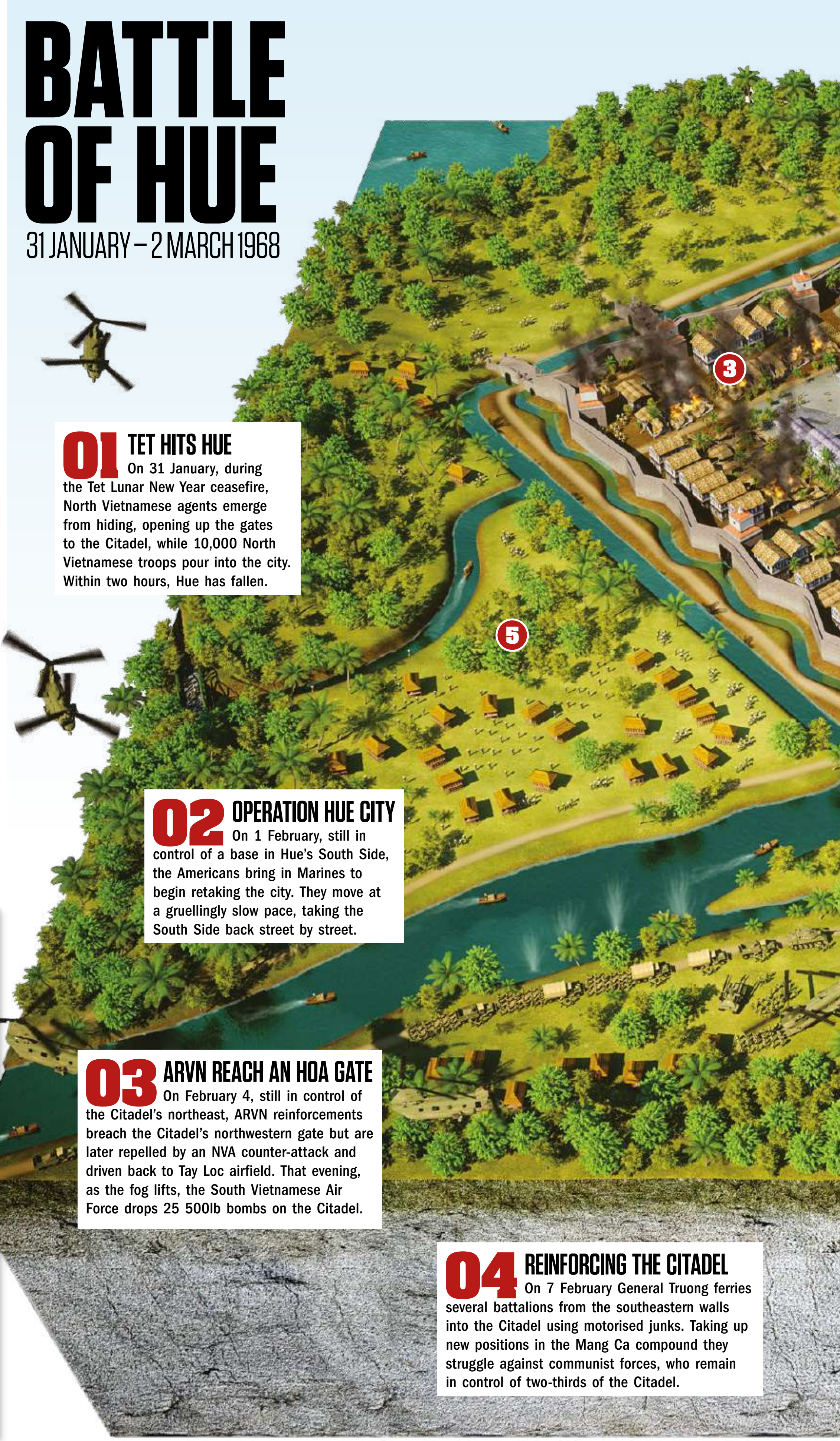
Although Vietnam's Nguyen dynasty was "long gone", adds Bowden, "even as the grand imperial edifices, tombs and palaces fell empty and into disrepair, the city of Hue grew and prospered. Uncle Ho himself had grown up inside the Citadel, and had received his earliest education just outside its walls".

Across the Perfume River, on the South Side, sat New Hue, a small-but-growing city with both the "bustle and appeal of a modern

***Below:** South Vietnamese Marines cross the Perfume River in a landing craft for the final assault to retake Hue*

BATTLE OF HUE

31 JANUARY – 2 MARCH 1968



01 TET HITS HUE

On 31 January, during the Tet Lunar New Year ceasefire, North Vietnamese agents emerge from hiding, opening up the gates to the Citadel, while 10,000 North Vietnamese troops pour into the city. Within two hours, Hue has fallen.

02 OPERATION HUE CITY

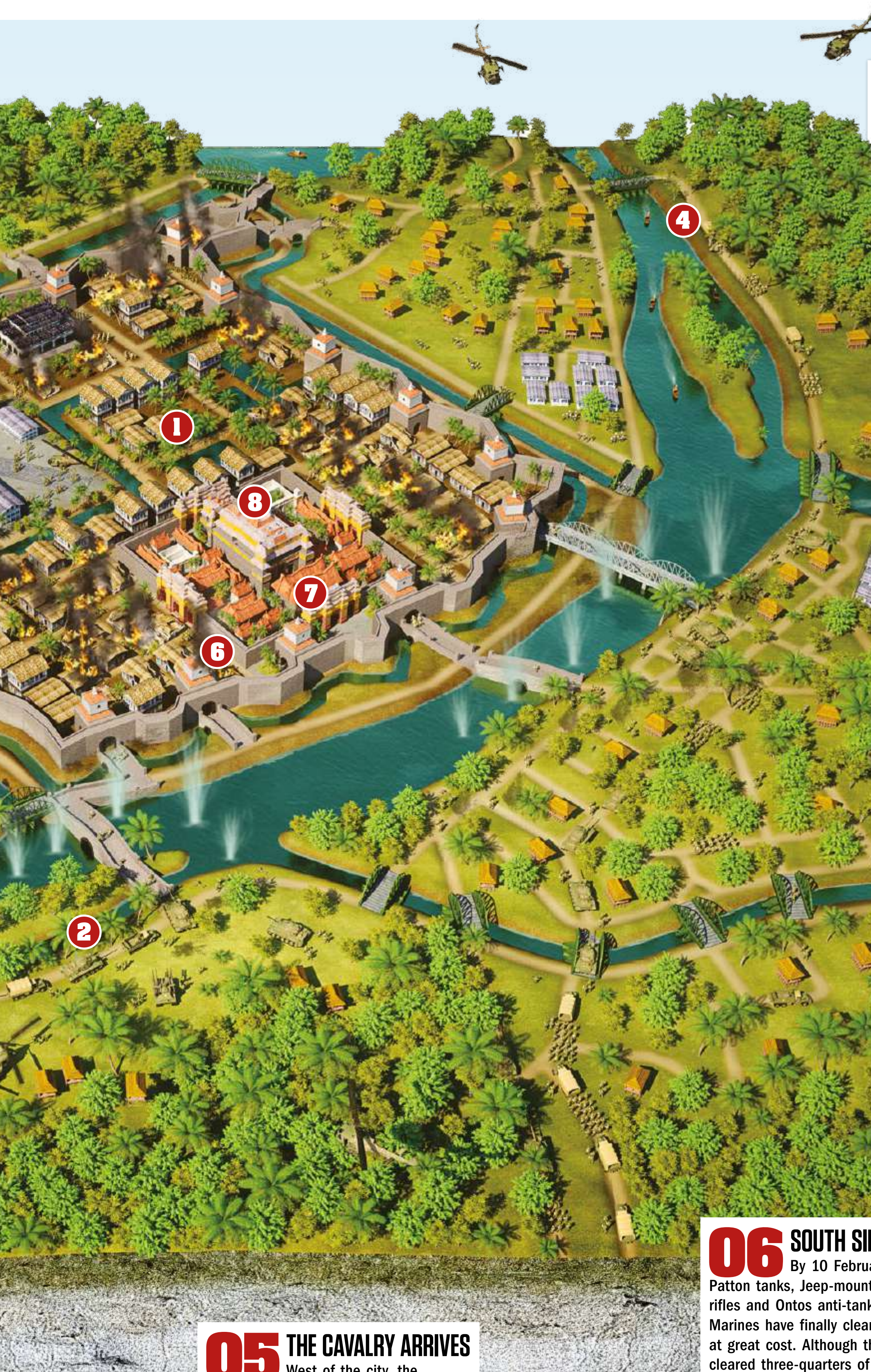
On 1 February, still in control of a base in Hue's South Side, the Americans bring in Marines to begin retaking the city. They move at a gruellingly slow pace, taking the South Side back street by street.

03 ARVN REACH AN HOA GATE

On February 4, still in control of the Citadel's northeast, ARVN reinforcements breach the Citadel's northwestern gate but are later repelled by an NVA counter-attack and driven back to Tay Loc airfield. That evening, as the fog lifts, the South Vietnamese Air Force drops 25 500lb bombs on the Citadel.

04 REINFORCING THE CITADEL

On 7 February General Truong ferries several battalions from the southeastern walls into the Citadel using motorised junks. Taking up new positions in the Mang Ca compound they struggle against communist forces, who remain in control of two-thirds of the Citadel.



Above: *US Marines look on as civilians flee the fighting in Hue, February 1968*

05 THE CAVALRY ARRIVES

West of the city, the 1st Air Cavalry is brought in to disrupt communist supply lines. However, after being overwhelmed at the fortified village of Que Chu, they flee under the cover of night to the hill of Nha Nahn.

06 SOUTH SIDE CLEARED

By 10 February, backed by Patton tanks, Jeep-mounted recoilless rifles and Ontos anti-tank vehicles, Marines have finally cleared the South, at great cost. Although the ARVN has cleared three-quarters of the Citadel, the NVA remain dug in.

07 ATTACKING THE CITADEL

Vietnamese Marines arrive to relive the exhausted airborne battalions. The US Marines, meanwhile, find that retaking the Citadel is a brutal task – they advance 200 metres a day, with tanks barely able to sneak through the narrow alleys adjacent to the fortress.

08 THE CITADEL RECAPTURED

With the communist supply lines finally shut down, the US Marines and ARVN launch a final assault on the Citadel, led by the South Vietnamese Black Panthers. On 24 February, after 25 days of fighting, the South Vietnamese flag is raised once again over the Citadel.

All images © Getty

city like Saigon" and "architectural treasures" such as pagodas and dynastic tombs, describes Bowden. It was also home to a Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) compound, manned by just 200 American and Australian advisors and staff.

Despite the city's importance, Villard highlights how few defenders were situated within it: "On the eve of Tet, the greater metropolitan area contained fewer than 1,000 South Vietnamese troops on active duty. Some of the garrison was on leave to celebrate Tet, either at their homes in the city or elsewhere in neighboring districts. The headquarters of the South Vietnamese 1st Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Ngo Quang Truong, made its home in the Mang Ca compound, a minifortress that occupied the northern corner of the Citadel."

Changing of the guard

Bowden paints a picture of the Tet Offensive unfolding in Hue: "Hours before daylight on January 31, 1968, the first day of Tet, the Lunar New Year, nearly ten thousand North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC) troops descended from hidden camps in the Central Highlands and overran the city of Hue, the historical capital of Vietnam."

> "BEFORE LONG, MOB VIOLENCE ESCALATED AS WAVES OF PURGES BECAME BROADER AND BROADER, TARGETING INTELLECTUALS AND STUDENTS"

Arnold describes how the US and South Vietnamese Armies had failed to take early indications of an attack seriously: "On 30 January, a US Army radio intercept unit overheard communist orders calling for an attack on Hue that night. Following standard procedure, it forwarded the message through channels. The Hue defenders did not receive the message in time. It was another in a long list of intelligence failures relating to the Tet Offensive."

Villard pinpoints the minute the attack began: "At 0333 on 31 January, a Viet Cong signal flare burst over Hue. Agents from the Hue City Sapper Unit, dressed like civilians but carrying automatic rifles and pistols, emerged from safe houses in the Citadel. Some cut the telephone lines that led into General Truong's headquarters. Others killed the soldiers standing watch at one of the southwestern gates and then opened it for the 800th Battalion, the 802d Battalion, and the 12th Sapper Battalion that were concealed in farmlands nearby. After rushing through the gate, the 800th Battalion veered north to attack the Tay Loc airfield, while the remaining units plunged east into the heart of the city."

Before long most of the city was in the hands of the 4th and 6th NVA Regiments and their VC comrades. The Citadel flagpole – the country's highest – now bore the red-blue-gold Viet Cong flag; all in a matter of two hours. "It was an extraordinarily bold and shocking move, taking the third-largest city in South Vietnam several years after America's military intervention was supposed to have shifted the war decisively in Saigon's favour," says Bowden.

Having prepared extensively, the National Liberation Front knew the city intimately. Asides from identifying every civil and military installation, VC intelligence officers prepared a list of 196 "cruel tyrants and reactionary elements" – largely South Vietnamese officials, officers, politicians and Americans – to be taken outside the city and killed.

The communists' first priority was the city's defence. "For this everyone able was put to work," says Bowden, adding: "Then there was the business of correcting errant thinking. For this there were public lectures on the seven tasks of all party members and on the slogans of Uncle Ho, which were to be memorised and shouted in unison. The Front

had issued stern prohibitions on looting, but the commissars and their local militias had a different understanding. They saw strong revolutionary logic in confiscating whatever was needed – food, shelter, supplies… or those things that caught their eye."

As well as collecting, cooking and delivering food to fighters, people were put to work digging trenches, foxholes and underground shelters. "Neighbourhoods were soon honeycombed with tunnels and bunkers," says Bowden. "There were not enough weapons to arm everyone, so families were told to cut bamboo stems to the length of long guns and paint them black. When the counterattack came, they were instructed to point their sticks at the enemy's planes and helicopters, or at advancing troops. That way the Americans would believe all the citizens of Hue were armed with guns, and see the people as united and indomitable."

1-11-63 BAT DIỆT

With the local populace not quite as ripe for revolution as other locations, the commissars turned to fear. Bowden adds: "Known 'enemies of the people' were immediately rousted from their homes. Retribution was high on the list of Front priorities. Orders called for 'a wave of assassinations of enemy thugs, spies, and secret police in the area'." Young men strolled the streets yelling through megaphones, "demanding that servants of the puppet regime show themselves", while informers rushed to point out homes of "traitors". Before long, mob violence escalated as waves of purges became broader and broader, targeting intellectuals and students.

US intelligence failed to grasp the severity of the situation, with Brigadier General Foster LaHue, assistant commander of the 1st Marine Division at the Phu Bai Combat Base, sending just two-and-a-half 'A Company' platoons to the city – linking up with four M-48 Patton tanks along the way. Under a hail of gunfire, they crossed a partially destroyed canal bridge, approaching what reminded Captain Gordon Batcheller of an old western town, with "two-storey wooden buildings with no sidewalks, and – most ominously – with no people".

Mounting the tanks, they sprayed the buildings, and the communist forces returned with a barrage of AK-47 fire and RPGs; one of which wiped out the lead tank. The US troops regrouped along a ditch, with the NVA firing down from rooftops and windows. "It was very different from the paddy and jungle war where

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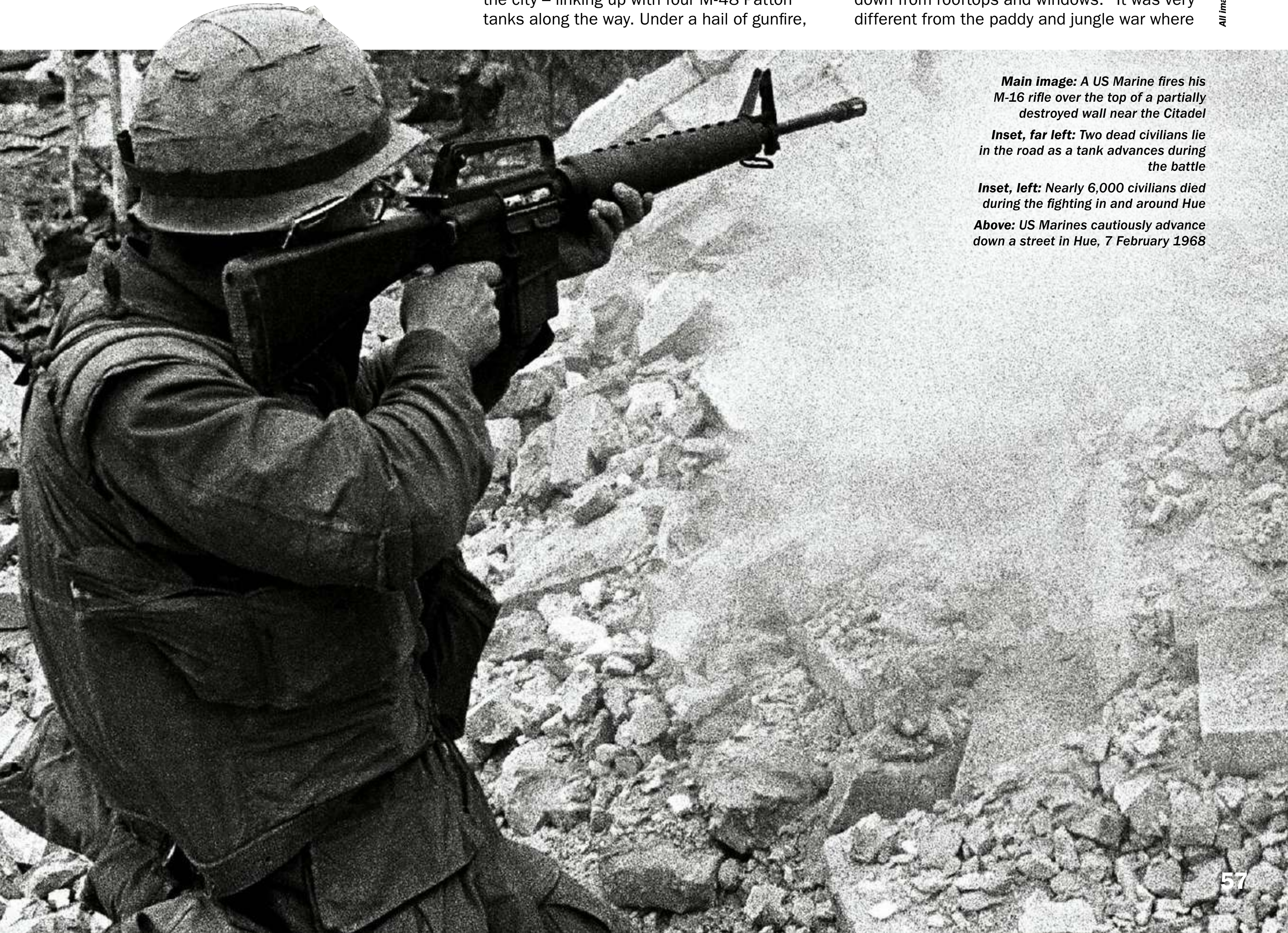

Main image: *A US Marine fires his M-16 rifle over the top of a partially destroyed wall near the Citadel*

Inset, far left: *Two dead civilians lie in the road as a tank advances during the battle*

Inset, left: *Nearly 6,000 civilians died during the fighting in and around Hue*

Above: *US Marines cautiously advance down a street in Hue, 7 February 1968*

one seldom saw the enemy," says Arnold. At noon, commanders at Phu Bai dispatched another company, Golf 2/5, to relieve the entrenched Americans.

The two units were ordered to cross the Perfume River and regroup with Truong in the Citadel. However, halfway across the bridge ten Marines were mown down by machine gun fire. Another group steamed on, only to be ambushed in the narrow, winding streets. With 50 killed or wounded, the two companies retreated to create a defensive perimeter around the MACV compound. The communists had the city but the Americans and South Vietnamese held onto the two strongholds, which would act as bases for counter-attacks and airborne reinforcements.

The communists seized American weapons from the ARVN armoury and liberated 2,500 inmates from jail, a fifth of whom joined their ranks. With a supply line running 50km west to the A Shau Valley, they remained well-armed and the nine battalions were soon reinforced with five more. They were also aided by a constant misty drizzle, which hindered Allied airpower. Rather than trying to destroy the two strongholds, they dug in and awaited a counter-attack.

Urban warfare

"The second day in Hue, 1 February, established the pattern for the remainder of the battle," says Arnold. "The generals, from LaHue on up, spoke in terms of 'mopping-up' and 'pushing the VC out of Hue this morning'. Three marine companies, later reinforced by a fourth, began fighting building by building through an eleven-by-nine block area to clear the South Side [of the River]. Every alley, street corner, window and garden wall could house a potential enemy."

The defenders turned every block into a fortress, mounting weapons in doorways and using back alleys to rush from one sector to another, launching blistering counter-attacks. Marines ground slowly through a series of fire-team rushes; although tanks were able to crawl along streets, battering enemy positions, they were easy targets for machine guns and RPGs. Tanks would frequently withdraw to replace those killed, often going through several crews a day. Lieutenant Colonel Cheatham said: "The moment a tank stuck its nose around the corner of a building, it looked like the Fourth of July." During one particular firefight, Cheatham recalled "hundreds and hundreds of rockets going out" and "coming back at us".

"THE DIFFICULTY OF THE FIRST ASSAULTS AGAINST THE CITADEL EQUALLED ANYTHING IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY"

Snipers posed a deadly threat, picking off Marines one-by-one and engaging in sniper duels, while infantry tried to whittle away their positions. Jeep-mounted recoilless rifles and Ontos anti-tank vehicles performed light hit-and-run attacks around blind corners. Marines often had no choice but to blast through a garden wall, door or building with a bazooka or recoilless rifle and send fire-teams into the breach – rushing into a bloody ambush on the other side.

While the Marines operated on the South Side of the river, Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam worked to recapture the Citadel, using the 1st ARVN Division HQ's perimeter as base of operations. By 4 February ARVN reinforcements had fought through several ambushes, taking heavy losses, to breach the Citadel's northwestern An Hoa Gate. However, two nights later an NVA counter-attack scaled the southwestern wall with grappling hooks, driving the South Vietnamese positioned there back to Tay Loc airfield.

Abandoning the futile effort to take the southeastern walls, Truong sent three battalions of the 3rd ARVN Regiment headlong into the city, using motorised junks. Entering through the northern gate, they took up new positions in the Mang Ca compound. However, despite the swelling numbers, the North Vietnamese remained in control of nearly two-thirds of the Citadel, moving in reinforcements under the cover of night.

To the west, the 1st Air Cavalry Division was sent into the middle of the supply line to shut it down. However, retired US Army lieutenant colonel and Vietnam veteran Charles Krohn writes that the 1st Air Cavalry's Major General John J Tolson remarked that the weather and intensity of antiaircraft fire "made it impractical and illogical to contemplate an air assault by any unit of the Division in the close proximity of Hue". Led by Colonel Sweet, after a bitter fight for the village of Que Chu the battalion was forced to retreat, embarking on a silent 11-hour night march to the hill of Nha Nahn – where the wounded were evacuated by helicopter and the dozen dead buried.

In the city, backed by Patton tanks and 106mm recoilless rifles, by 10 February the Marines had cleared the south side and focused their efforts on the Citadel across the river. However, the battle had taken its toll: "Ten rifle platoons, which would normally be led by first lieutenants, were commanded by three second lieutenants, one gunnery sergeant, two staff sergeants, two buck sergeants and two senior corporals," writes Arnold. Although the ARVN had cleared three quarters of the Citadel, the NVA remained dug in. Arnold adds: "Indicative of their fighting spirit was a spectacular nocturnal raid by VC combat-swimmers, who mined another important river bridge and dropped two of its spans into the water."

***Above, left:** Members of the 3rd brigade, First Air Cavalry, jump into a ditch after communist troops ambushed them as they moved down Highway One towards Hue*

***Above, middle:** US troops look on as an enemy bomb detonates in the distance. American forces suffered 142 dead and 857 wounded in the Battle of Hue*

***Above, right:** A wounded Marine receives treatment from his comrades as they take cover near a bullet-riddled building in Hue*

Having cleared Saigon, Vietnamese Marines arrived to relieve airborne battalions, as did the US 1/5 Marines. "The difficulty of the first assaults against the Citadel equalled anything in Marine Corps history," says Arnold, with tanks "barely" able to operate in the narrow alleys. Even with the use of debilitating CS gas, most days they were unable to advance more than 200 metres. During the week of 13-20 February, four Marine companies suffered 47 deaths and 300 wounded. By the month's end the 1st Cavalry had finally shut down the communist supply lines and the Marines and ARVN prepared their final assaults, spearheaded by the 1st ARVN Division's Black Panther Company.

The Black Panthers charged at Imperial Palace, some using scaling ladders to get over the high walls. After 25 gruelling days, the NVA finally collapsed and the VC flag was pulled from the flagpole. It had been the longest sustained infantry battle of the war, with incredibly high casualties: the ARVN suffered 384 killed and 1,800 wounded, the US Army 142 dead and 857 wounded, and the communists up to 5,113 killed and 89 captured.

However, the greatest toll was taken on Hue's civilians – with up to 5,800 perishing in the fighting, or executed. The city itself had been reduced to rubble and 116,000 of its 140,000 residents left homeless. In the aftermath, the city fell victim to widespread looting, with Colonel Gravel complaining of "AVRN looting behind us". The Associated Press even ran a photograph of a Marine hauling off a large painting in reports of Marines also taking part. This was backed by a Swiss journalist, who claimed to have seen "numerous breaches of discipline which would not be tolerated in the Swiss Army" such as drinking, looting and shooting animals for fun.

Aftermath

Although the Americans and South Vietnamese succeeded in taking back the city, Bowden argues that it qualified as a "victory" only in a "narrow" sense. "Both sides badly miscalculated. Hanoi counted on a popular uprising that didn't come, while Washington and Saigon, blindsided, refused to believe the truth. Both sides played their roles courageously, and to terrible effect."

He summarises: "Hanoi's troops seized the city and were then forced at tremendous cost to relinquish it, while the city itself was levelled in the process. The status quo was upheld but greatly diminished, and it lasted for only a few more years." He adds. "Nearly all the civilians I interviewed who survived the battle described losing family members, most often to shells and bombs. The survivors described, without hesitation, bombardment as the most terrifying memory, even those who'd had family members executed. If Hanoi did not win many new friends by taking Hue, neither did the Allies in taking it back."

Although the communists lost five-times as many soldiers than the US and ARVN, those losses weighed heavier in the US than in North Vietnam. Hue had been an overreach – one that leaders like Ho Chi Minh and General Giap had tried to stop because they knew they could not hold it for long. However, during the Tet Offensive the North Vietnamese had achieved complete tactical surprise and, despite being driven away from Hue after three weeks, "it was the impact of the initial blow that resonated most loudly".

Nguyen Van Quang, a student revolutionary who smuggled guns into the city and led the Front's forces through Chanh Tay Gate, later lamented the Tet Offensive's failure to take more cities: "If things had gone smoothly, we would have had an uprising throughout the South… Imagine that if we could have succeeded, taken over Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, Can Tho, Da Lat, Nha Trang, just as we did with Hue, the war would have ended much earlier. There would have been less loss for both sides." Like many others, even after leaving Hue, he believed "that the Americans had no chance of winning militarily in Vietnam".

Bowden adds: "Bringing the war to city streets deeply undermined the faith of middle-of-the road Vietnamese in President Thieu's government. Non-ideological citizens – read, most citizens – were concerned primarily with survival. They wanted to be on the winning side when the war ended. Tet lowered the odds on Saigon as the safer bet. Hanoi may have aimed too high, but in the long run its effort succeeded in ways its leaders could not have fully foreseen."

In conclusion, Bowden argues that the Tet Offensive and the Battle of Hue was not only a turning point of the war but also in American history: "When it was over, debate concerning the war in the United States was never again about winning, only about how to leave. And never again would Americans fully trust their leaders."

FURTHER READING

- ● ***The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S McNamara*** (2003)
- ● Robert McNamara – ***In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*** (1996)
- ● Philip Jones Griffiths – ***Vietnam Inc.*** (1971)

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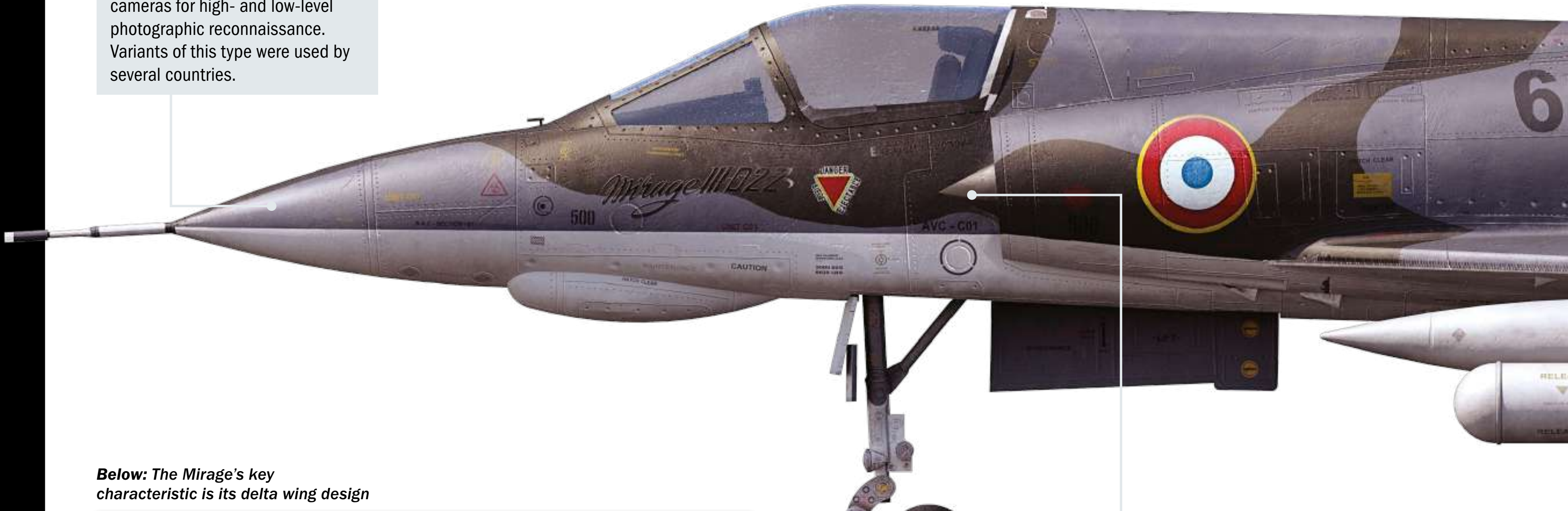
DASSAULT Mirage III

WORDS **STUART HADAWAY**

The French multi-role delta jet that's still in service nearly seven decades after its first flight



ON THE NOSE

The Mirage IIIR had an extended and oddly angular nose, containing cameras for high- and low-level photographic reconnaissance. Variants of this type were used by several countries.

MOUSE IN THE HOLE

A semi-conical 'mouse' in the mouth of each intake enabled the airflow to be adjusted according to speed.

***Below:** The Mirage's key characteristic is its delta wing design*

The Dassault Mirage III was the culmination of a series of delta-winged types designed to meet the French need for an all-weather supersonic interceptor. The Mirage III first flew in 1956, and the IIIC entered service with the French Air Force in 1961. A few years later, the IIIE entered service with additional avionics and a ground-attack capability. Capable of Mach 2.2 (with rocket assist), the type has proven an excellent and abiding design, used by a dozen countries (often as the 'Mirage 5'). One of the Mirage's most appealing attributes is that the type is easily modified to meet the needs (and budget) of the purchasing air force, and nearly 30 variants (including prototypes and two-seat trainers) have been built, plus Israel's home-built developments.

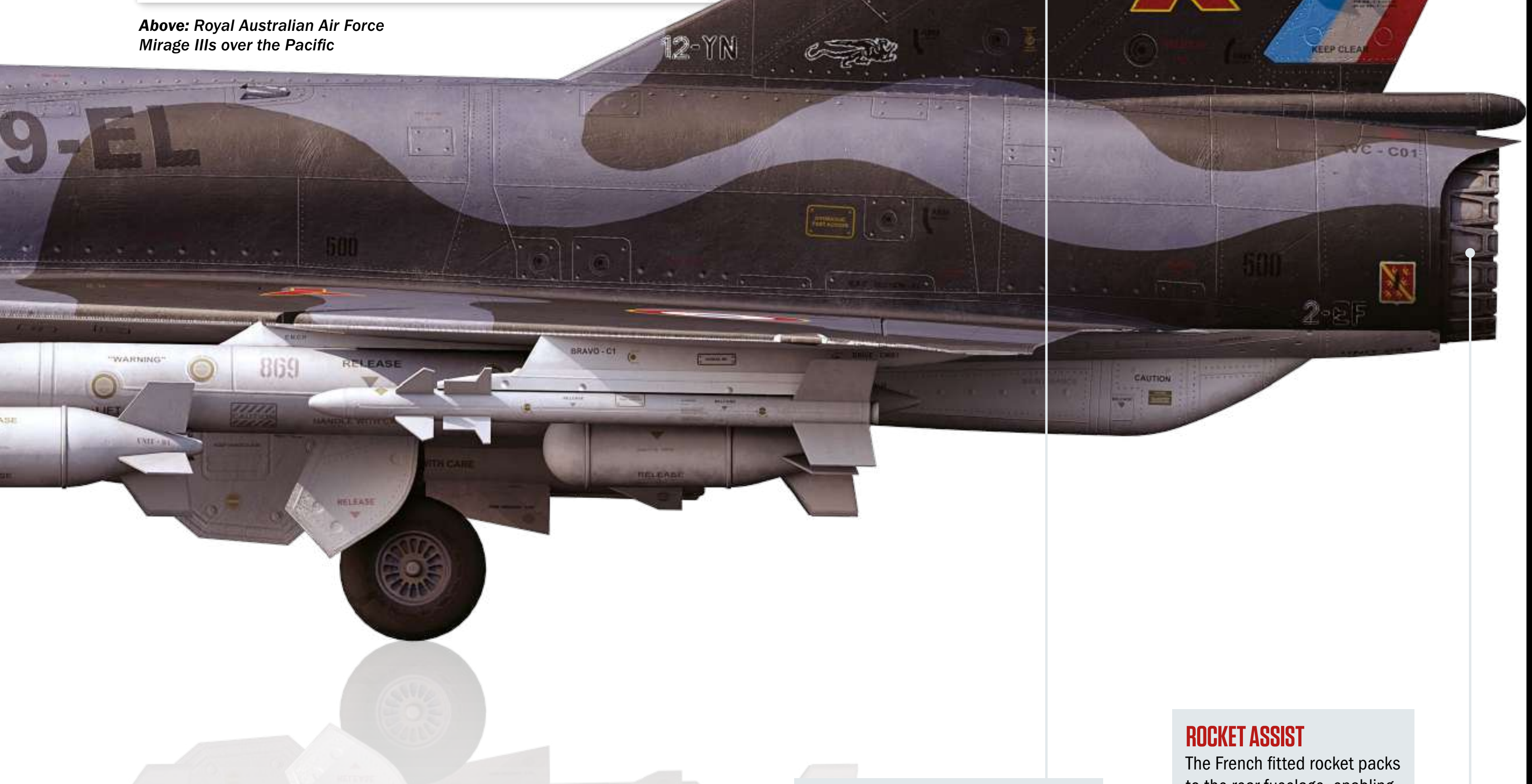
The delta wing configuration gives the Mirage tremendous high speeds but can cause control problems at lower speeds. The delta wing also limits the type's manoeuvrability yet despite this it proved a highly effective dog-fighter, seeing extensive and very successful air-to-air combat with the Israelis from 1963 onwards. However, it proved of limited use with the Argentine Air Force during the Falklands War of 1982 when they had to operate at the very limit of their range from the mainland.

DASSAULT MIRAGE III

COMMISSIONED	1954
ORIGIN	FRANCE
LENGTH	15.03M (49FT 4IN)
WINGSPAN	8.22M (27FT)
ENGINE	1 X SNECMA ATAR 09C 41.97KN (9440LBF) DRY/60.8KN (13,700LBF) WITH AFTERBURNER
PRIMARY WEAPON	AIM-9 SIDEWINDERS, 2 X 30MM (1.18IN) CANNON
SECONDARY WEAPON	RANGE OF AIR-DROPPED MUNITIONS AND ROCKETS
CREW	1

A3-11
113
A3-113

***Above:** Royal Australian Air Force Mirage IIIs over the Pacific*



ANTENNA IN THE TAIL

A range of HF, UHF and VHF aerials and radar (including radar-warning receiver) antenna could be fitted in the tip of the tail to suit the operator's needs.

ROCKET ASSIST

The French fitted rocket packs to the rear fuselage, enabling interceptors to 'sprint' from Mach 2 to Mach 2.2 for short periods. The Swiss used a similar system for assisting take-offs from short runways.

> "CAPABLE OF MACH 2.2 (WITH ROCKET ASSIST), THE TYPE HAS PROVEN AN EXCELLENT AND ABIDING DESIGN"

Illustration: Nicholas Forder

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ARMAMENT

The Mirage has two pylons under each wing and four under the fuselage, which can be used for a mix of air-to-air missiles (AIM-9 Sidewinder, Matra 530 or similar), external fuel tanks and air dropped munitions. The later can include bombs of up to 450kg (990lb) each, and rocket pods such as the 19 x 68mm (2.7in) SNEB air-to-ground unguided projectiles system. Until 1991 the French Mirages could also carry one AN-52 tactical nuclear bomb.

Mirage IIIC

The Mirage was an effective dog-fighter with missiles or cannon; this Israeli aircraft claimed 13 air-to-air victories

"UNTIL 1991 THE FRENCH MIRAGES COULD ALSO CARRY ONE AN-52 TACTICAL NUCLEAR BOMB"

An Israeli-built jet based on the Mirage, called the Kfir C7

An Australian Mirage takes off with air-to-air missiles on the outer-wing pylons

Left: *An Australian Mirage being checked over; one of the Mirage III's main appeals is its low maintenance requirements*

Below: *Several two-seat training versions have been produced, including this Swiss Mirage 5DS*

DESIGN

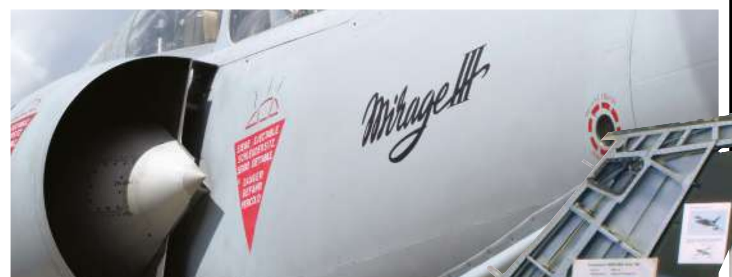
The Mirage III is an all-metal, low-wing delta jet optimised for high-speed flight at any altitude. The delta wings, supported by three main spars, provide extensive interior space for avionics and fuel, but the design can lead to control problems. The trailing edges of the wing are formed into elevons to assist control, but even so it can be difficult to handle and slow to respond at low speeds. Taking off and landing can be particularly tricky, with buffeting and delayed responses leading to loss of control.

Mirage III
J-2012
DASSAULT

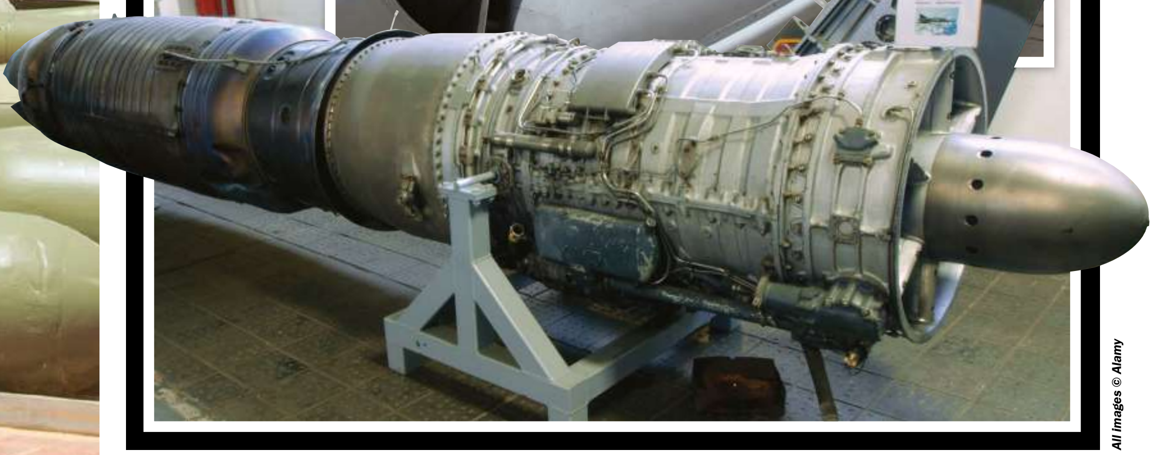
ENGINE

The Mirage III has used various engines during its long and varied career, providing an average top speed of Mach 2. On all models the engine fills most of the fuselage behind the cockpit, with air intakes on either side below the canopy. The French Mirages had SEPR 841 rocket installations under the rear fuselage to provide an additional Mach 0.2 'sprint' at high altitudes. No other country used these, although the Swiss used a similar rocket system to assist in taking off from short runways.

Right: *The moveable 'mouse' in the engine intake*



Below: *A Snecma Atar from a Mirage IIIRS*



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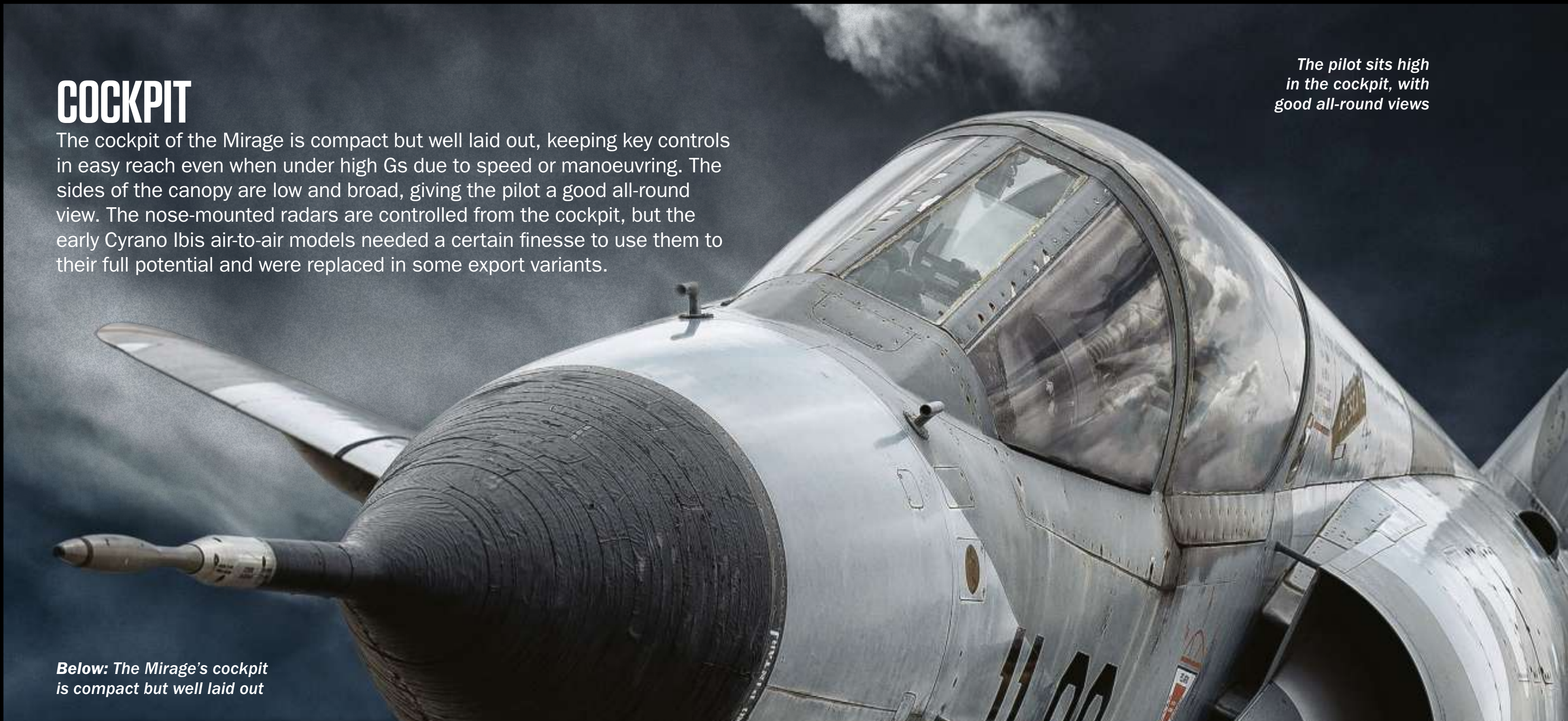
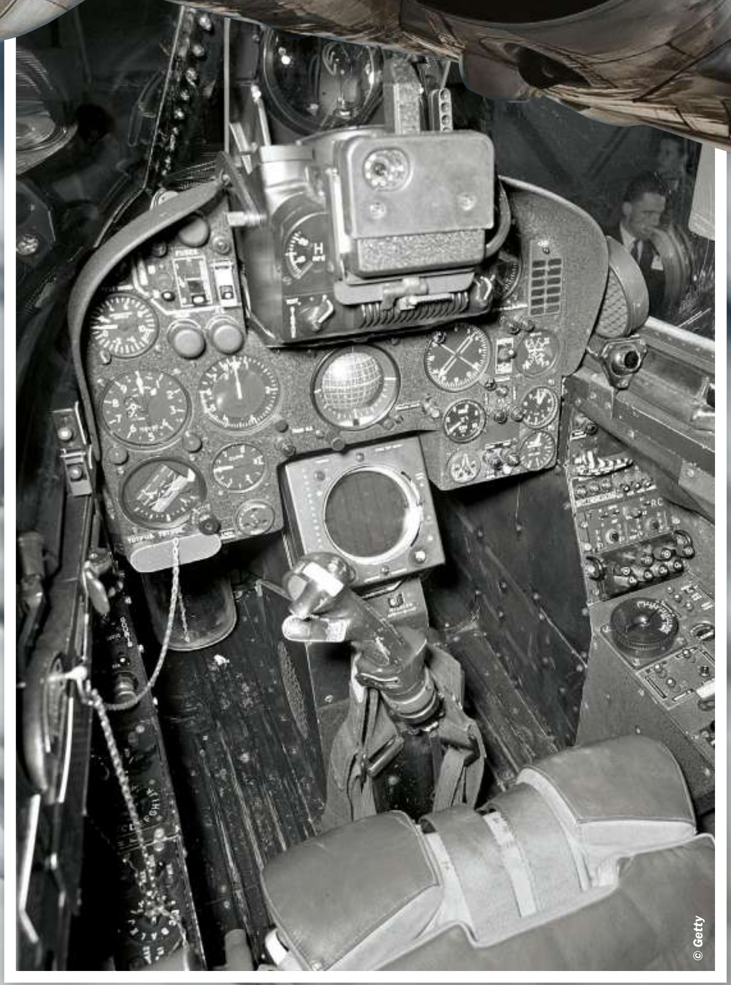
COCKPIT

The cockpit of the Mirage is compact but well laid out, keeping key controls in easy reach even when under high Gs due to speed or manoeuvring. The sides of the canopy are low and broad, giving the pilot a good all-round view. The nose-mounted radars are controlled from the cockpit, but the early Cyrano Ibis air-to-air models needed a certain finesse to use them to their full potential and were replaced in some export variants.



The pilot sits high in the cockpit, with good all-round views

***Below:** The Mirage's cockpit is compact but well laid out*



***Right:** The cockpit of the first Mirages; they were constantly updated in subsequent variants*

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507
Mirage III C

Israel had the most extensive and successful combat record with the Mirage

SERVICE HISTORY

The first production version, the Mirage IIIC, entered service with the French in 1961 and was soon finding export customers. Fast, capable and easy to maintain, it was also easily modified and the IIIE followed only three years later with multi-role capability. The type first saw combat with the Israelis in 1963, and the Mirage was devastatingly effective as both a fighter and a ground-attack aircraft during the Six-Day War of 1967, and as a fighter during the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Mirages also saw active service with the South African Air Force during the Border War from the 1960s through to the late 1980s.

The Pakistani Air Force has used the Mirage since 1967, and first used it in action as a fighter and for ground attack during its 1971 war with India. The type went through a major upgrade programme in the 1990s, and remains in service today.

> **"THE MIRAGE WAS DEVASTATINGLY EFFECTIVE AS BOTH A FIGHTER AND A GROUND-ATTACK AIRCRAFT DURING THE SIX-DAY WAR OF 1967"**

A Belgian Mirage 5BR, an export variant of the IIIE

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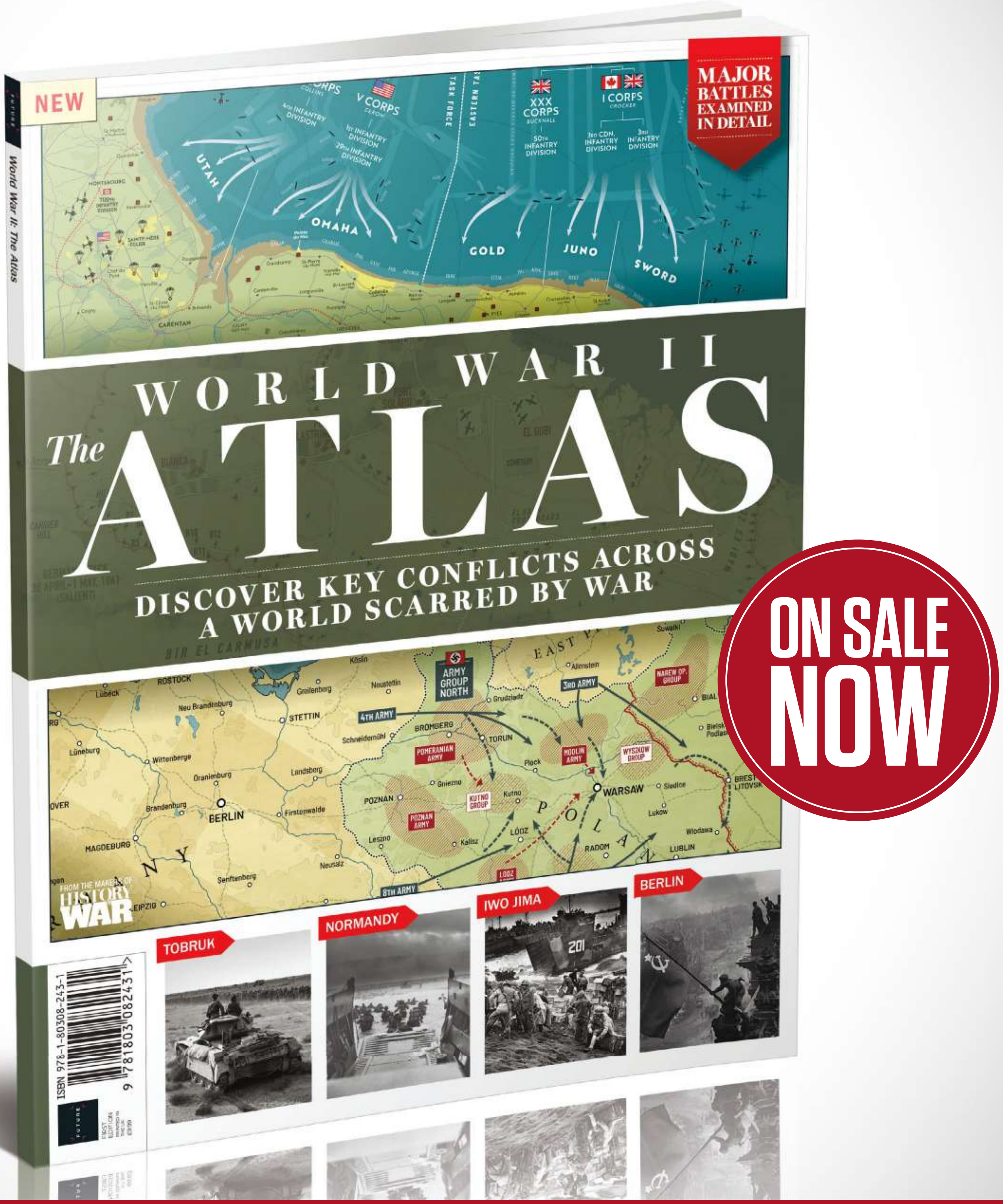
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An international aviation charity has uncovered aerial photography that captures the devastation wrought in the Armenian Highlands during WWI

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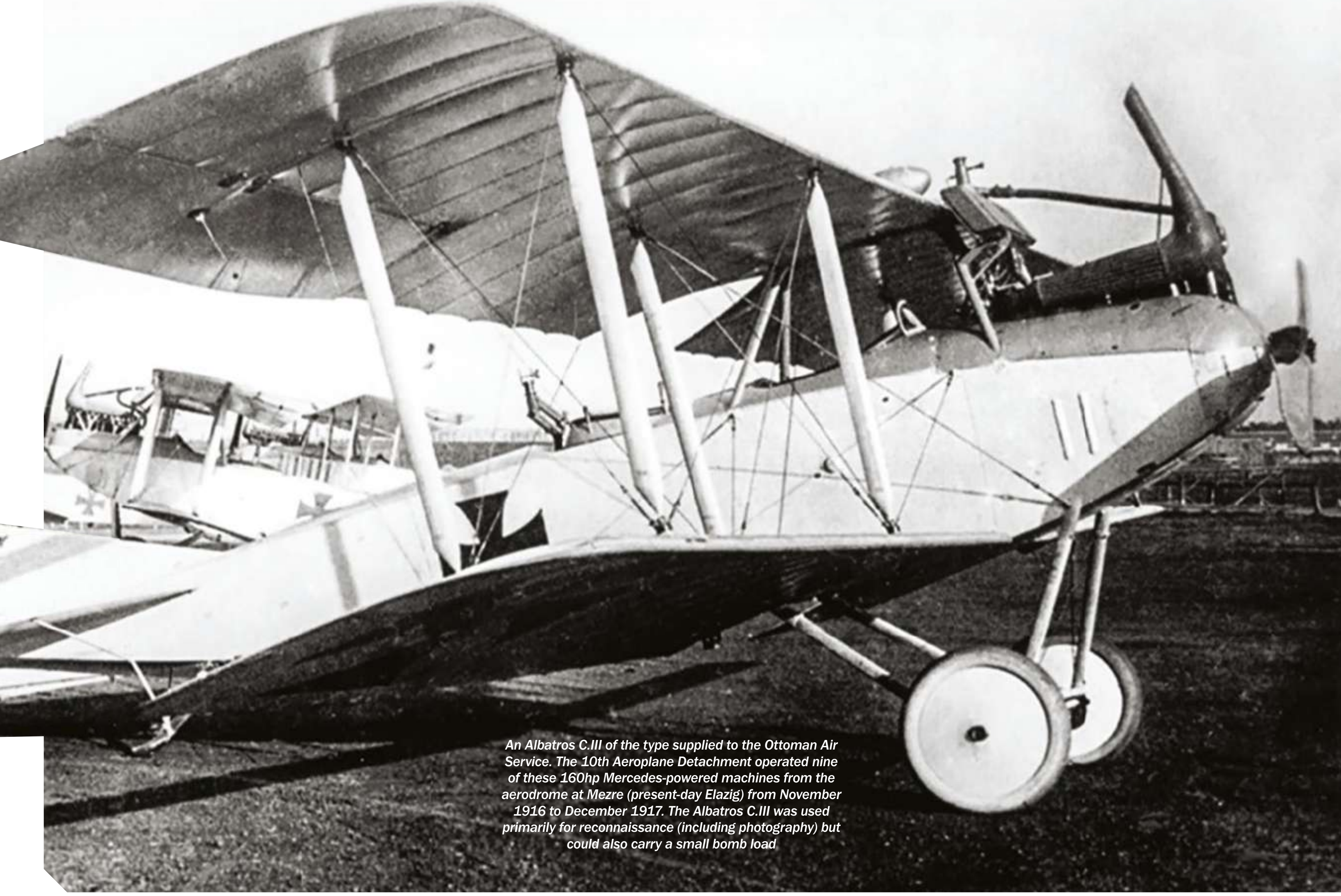
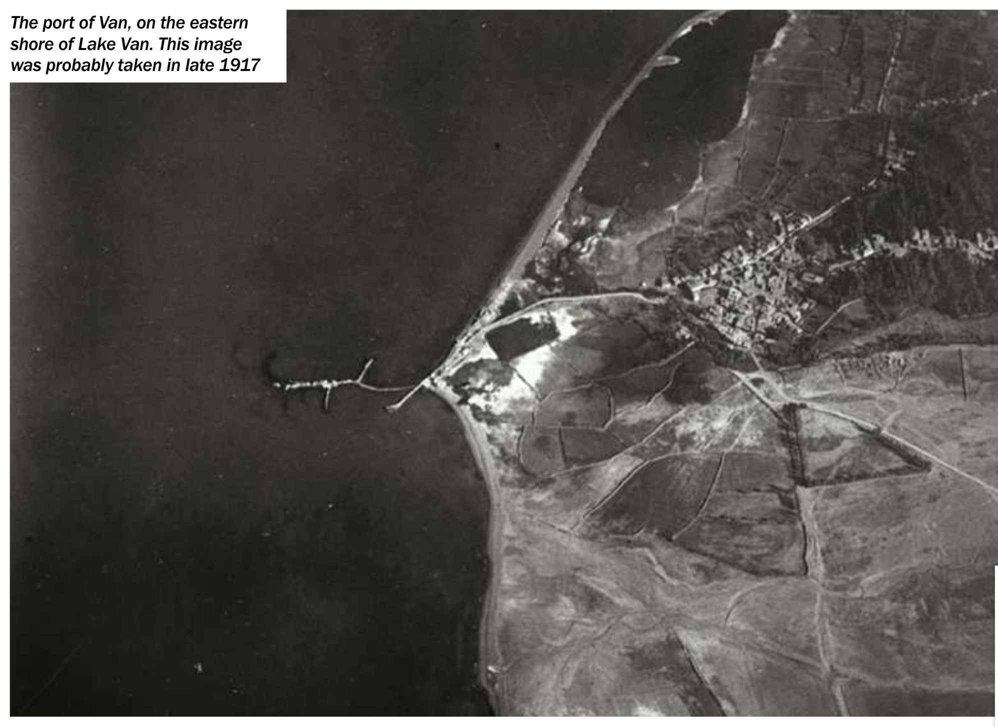
NEW WINDOW ON A GENOCIDE

The World War I aviation historical society Cross & Cockade International (CCI) has unveiled aerial photography depicting devastated villages and settlements in the Armenian Highlands, the scene of widespread atrocities

WORDS **PETER DYE**

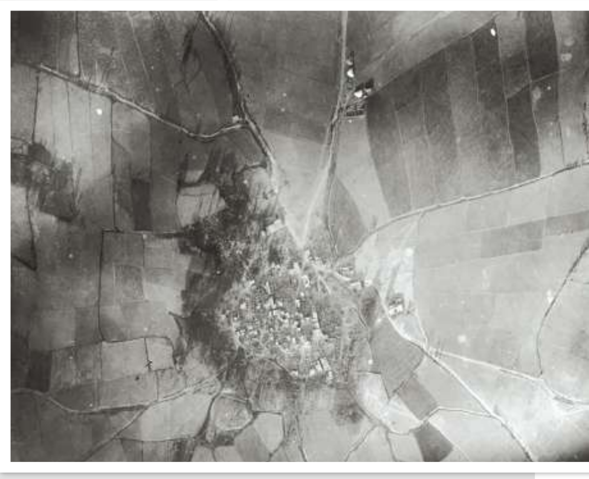


An Albatros C.III of the type supplied to the Ottoman Air Service. The 10th Aeroplane Detachment operated nine of these 160hp Mercedes-powered machines from the aerodrome at Mezre (present-day Elazig) from November 1916 to December 1917. The Albatros C.III was used primarily for reconnaissance (including photography) but could also carry a small bomb load



The port of Van, on the eastern shore of Lake Van. This image was probably taken in late 1917

***Below:** An aerial view of the 10th Aeroplane Detachment's aerodrome at Mezre (present-day Elazig). Four canvas hangars can be seen, adjacent to the landing ground, at the top of the image. The nearby village of Sursuru (present-day Olgunlar) appears entirely destroyed and abandoned. Before 1915, the village had a population of 1,100 Armenians in 170 households. The auxiliary lenses on the top and bottom far-right of the image indicate respectively the pitch and bank of the machine for photogrammetry purposes*



The First World War witnessed a rapid advance in new technologies, notably aircraft. Nowhere was this more evident than in the field of aerial photography. By 1917, all the belligerents had developed sophisticated systems for taking, processing and interpreting aerial imagery. Because of their well-established pre-war photographic industry and high-quality optical glass, the German Air Service was one of the most advanced in this field, employing high-resolution cameras. German aerial photographers were present on all fronts, from Finland to as far south as Cairo, creating over 1.5 million individual images, the bulk of these covering areas that had never previously been photographed.

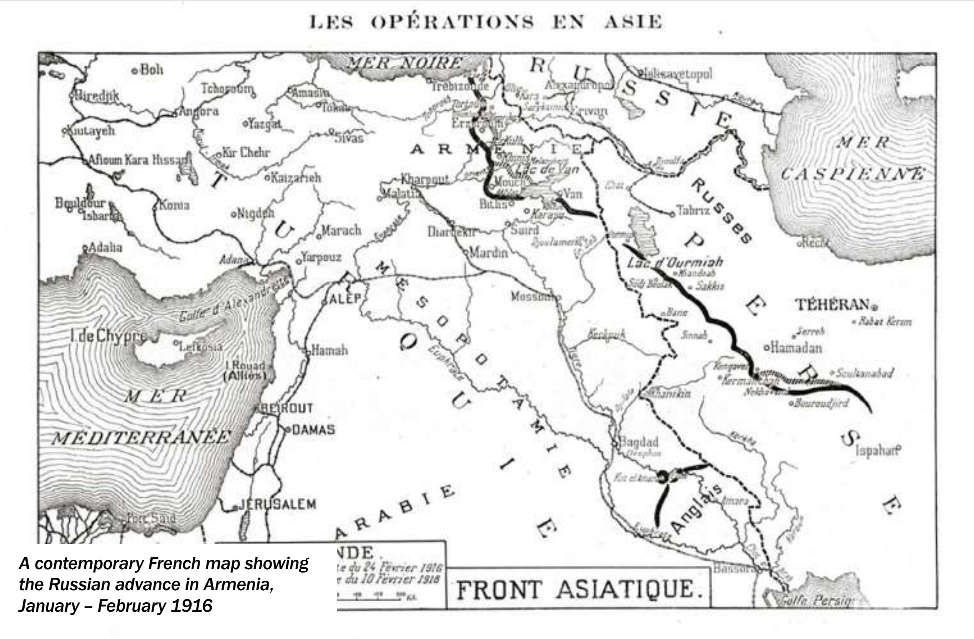
One of the remote regions where German photographers were active was the Armenian Highlands in the Ottoman Eastern Provinces, where the Ottoman and Russian armies had been fighting since the first months of the war. Flying fragile biplanes, at a height of several thousand metres, German and Ottoman airmen used hand-held glass plate cameras to photograph the villages and towns in an effort to locate Russian Army positions.

Thirteen sepia prints from some of these images were recently found in France. How they reached France from the Armenian Highlands is unknown. What we do know is they represent the first known aerial photos of the region and, just as importantly, offer new evidence of the destruction that followed the forced deportations of 1915-16 when the Ottoman authorities sent the Armenian population to concentration camps in the Syrian desert.

It is estimated that over one million individuals were killed or subsequently died from disease or starvation in forced marches. The Turkish government insists that the deportations were a military necessity, intended to forestall a future rebellion, but to date 30 countries have recognised the deportations as genocide, including the US, France and Germany. Armenian names, language and culture in the Ottoman Eastern Provinces that had existed for over two-and-a-half millennia were largely extinguished in less than two years.

Comprehending such immense suffering on a such vast scale is difficult, but these unique aerial images enable us to see the direct impact on the households in an individual village and, by using pre-war census data, to quantify the human cost. It was a fate replicated in hundreds of other villages and towns across the Armenian Highlands.

The Allied withdrawal from Gallipoli in 1915 enabled the Ottoman High Command



A contemporary French map showing the Russian advance in Armenia, January – February 1916

"OVER ONE MILLION INDIVIDUALS WERE KILLED OR SUBSEQUENTLY DIED FROM DISEASE OR STARVATION IN FORCED MARCHES"

Images © Peter Dye / Cross and Cockade International

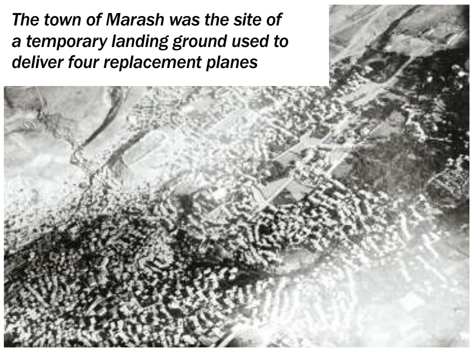
to reinforce their positions in the Eastern Provinces. The experienced Ottoman 2nd Army, transferred from the Dardanelles, took over the southern part of the front where it was hoped they would threaten the flank of any future Russian offensive; however, most of its units were not in position when the Russians launched a major attack between Trabzon and Lake Vad. Erzurum (present-day Erzerum) was captured on 1 March 1916, followed by Trabzon on 15 April and Erzincan on 25 July.

To help stabilise the front a new unit, 10ncu Tayyare Böluk (10th Aeroplane Detachment), was formed at Istanbul for service with the 2nd Army. Equipped with five Albatros C.III aircraft, it took nearly two months to arrive at Diyarbekir, (present-day Diyarbakir). They eventually reached HQ 2nd Army at Harput (Kharpert) on 9 November 1916, setting up a landing ground in the village of Sursuru (present-day Olgunlar), close to the town of Mezre (present-day Elazig) in the valley below Harput. The detachment soon began reconnaissance missions, even though it had few aircraft and a serious lack of spare parts.

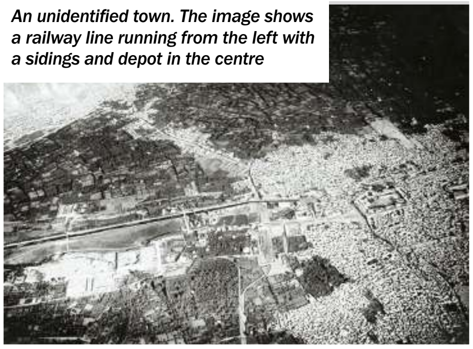
The German and Ottoman crews faced extremely difficult flying conditions with poor and unpredictable weather. They had to fly at high altitude to cross the mountain ranges, enduring severe cold and lack of oxygen. The limited supply of spare parts, including propellers and tyres, caused constant maintenance problems. Engines were unreliable but there were few places where a safe emergency landing could be made. Poor maps and the threat of airborne attacks, as well as being regularly fired upon from the ground, further increased the danger. So many machines were lost in accidents that a further six planes were sent to Sursuru during 1917 just to be able to continue operations.

The images taken by 10ncu Tayyare Böluk show the rugged beauty of the landscape, dominated by high mountain ranges, steep-sided valleys and swift-flowing streams.

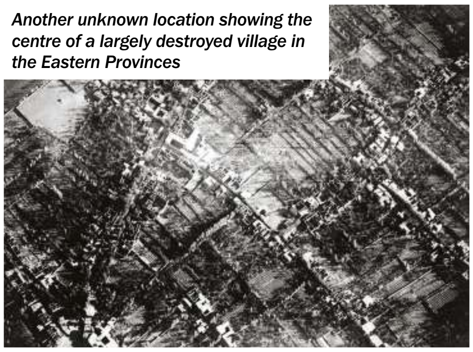
> **“ENGINES WERE UNRELIABLE BUT THERE WERE FEW PLACES FOR A SAFE EMERGENCY LANDING. POOR MAPS AND THE THREAT OF AIRBORNE ATTACKS FURTHER INCREASED THE DANGER”**



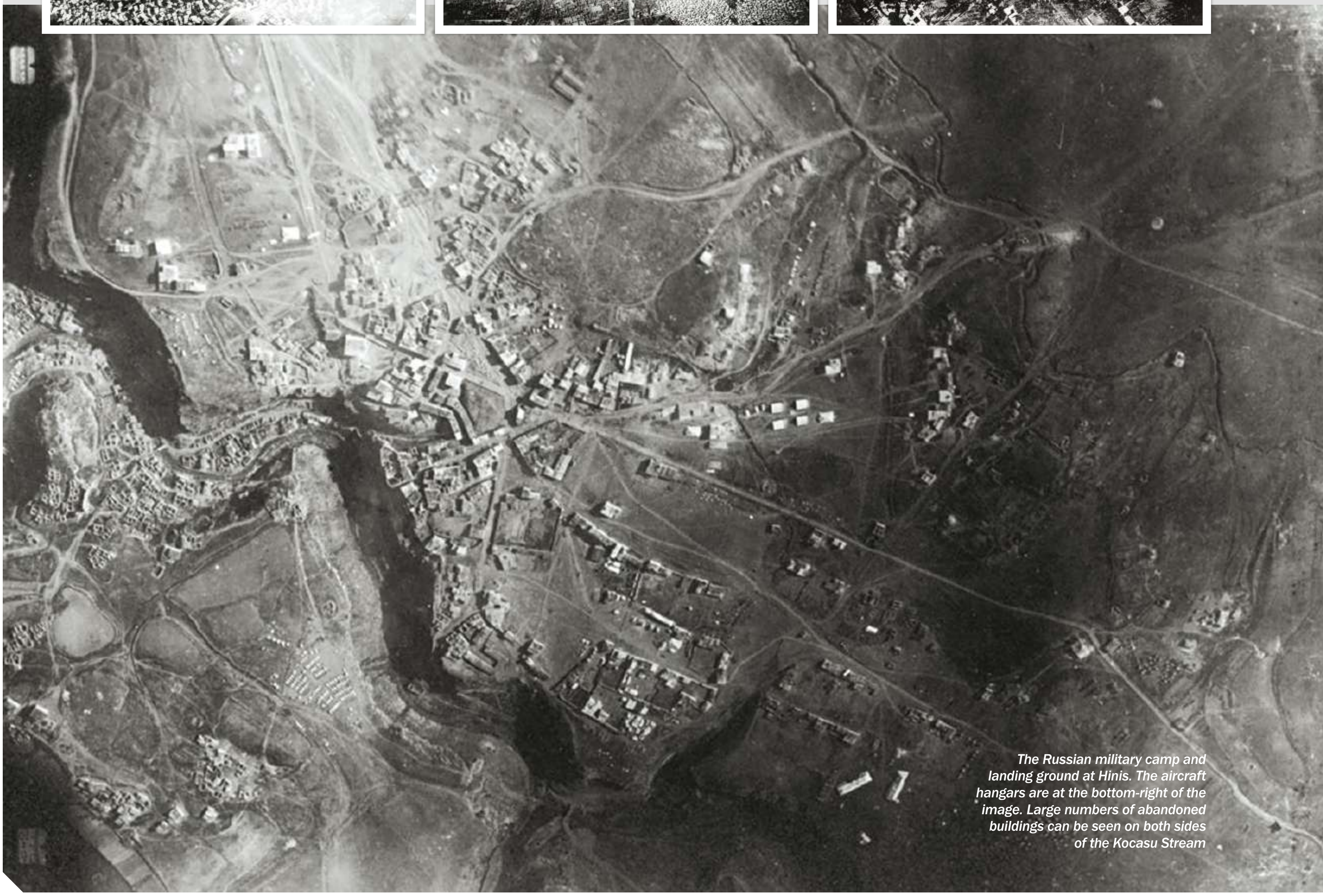
The town of Marash was the site of a temporary landing ground used to deliver four replacement planes



An unidentified town. The image shows a railway line running from the left with a sidings and depot in the centre



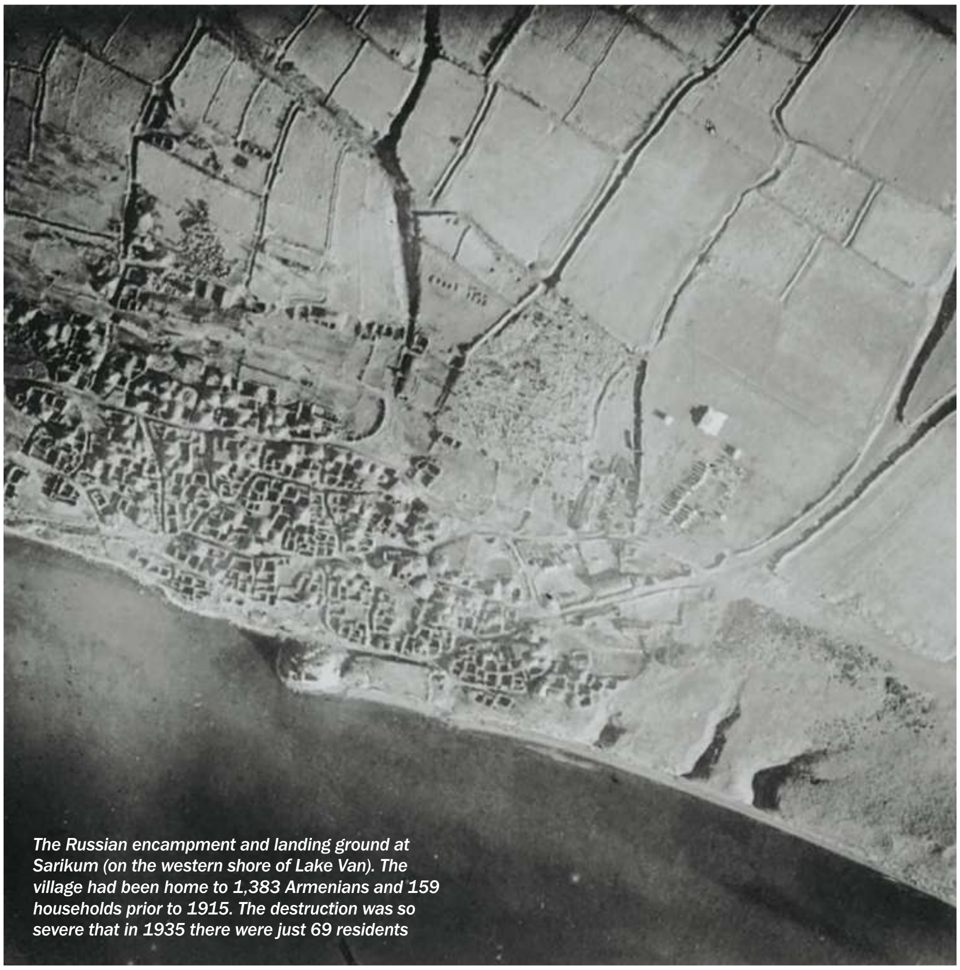
Another unknown location showing the centre of a largely destroyed village in the Eastern Provinces



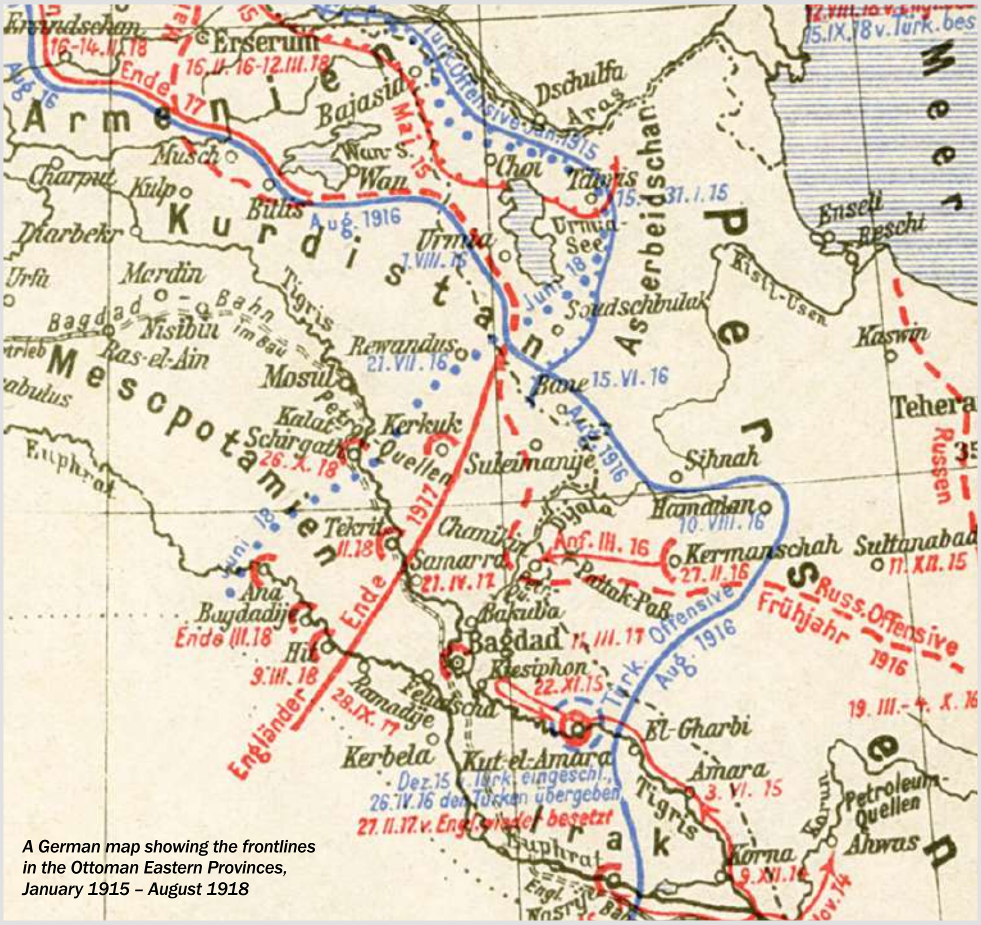
The Russian military camp and landing ground at Hinis. The aircraft hangars are at the bottom-right of the image. Large numbers of abandoned buildings can be seen on both sides of the Kocasu Stream

Winter comes early to the Armenian Highlands and lasts deep into spring. There are few roads or large towns, but numerous small settlements can be found scattered across the valleys and high plains. The area is dominated by the Euphrates River and its tributaries that flow west from the mountains, north of the Taurus, before turning south towards Syria and Iraq. The images also show a succession of abandoned villages, houses roofless and the population dispersed – either killed or deported. There are few signs of cultivation or animals. Fields are abandoned and the roads empty. The only evidence of habitation is the occasional Russian Army camp and defensive earthworks close to watercourses or key routes. The scale of the destruction is sobering.

None of the prints that were acquired were captioned but, by using satellite imagery and Ottoman census returns, it has proved possible to identify specific locations and the size of the pre-war population. For example, fewer than 30 houses survive in the village of Sursuru (present-day Olgunlar). In 1915, it had a population of 1,100 Armenians in 170 households. The village of Sarikum (290km to the east, on the western shore of Lake Van) shows a similar picture. Prior to 1915, it had been home to 1,383 Armenians and 159 households. The destruction was so severe that 20 years later (in 1935), there were just 69 residents. Armenian names, language and culture in the Ottoman Eastern Provinces that had existed for over two-and-a-half-millennia were almost completely wiped out in less than two years.



The Russian encampment and landing ground at Sarikum (on the western shore of Lake Van). The village had been home to 1,383 Armenians and 159 households prior to 1915. The destruction was so severe that in 1935 there were just 69 residents


Erserum
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Charput
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Nisibin
Bagdadbahn
Ras-el-Ain
Mosul
Dschulfa
Aras
Choi
Täbris
Urmia
Urmia-See
Aserbeidschan
Soudschbulak
Rewandus
Bane
Kerkuk
Suleimanije
Sihnah
Hamadan
Kermanschah
Sultanabad
Kaswin
Teheran
Enseli
Rescht
Tekrit
Samarra
Bakuba
Bagdad
Ktesiphon
Kerbela
Kut-el-Amara
El-Gharbi
Amara
Korna
Ahwas
Petroleum-Quellen
Tigris
Euphrat
Ana
Hit
Bagdadije
Aug. 1916
Türk. Offensive Jan. 1915
Russ. Offensive Frühjahr 1916
Türk. Offensive Aug. 1916
Engländer
Russen
Ende III.18
Dez.15 Türk. eingeschl.
26.IV.16 den Türken übergeben
27.II.17 v. Engl. wieder besetzt

A German map showing the frontlines in the Ottoman Eastern Provinces, January 1915 – August 1918

For more information

Details of the pre-war population of the individual villages shown in the photographs has been provided by the Armenian historian George Aghjayan. The results of his ongoing research can be found at westernarmenia.weebly.com.

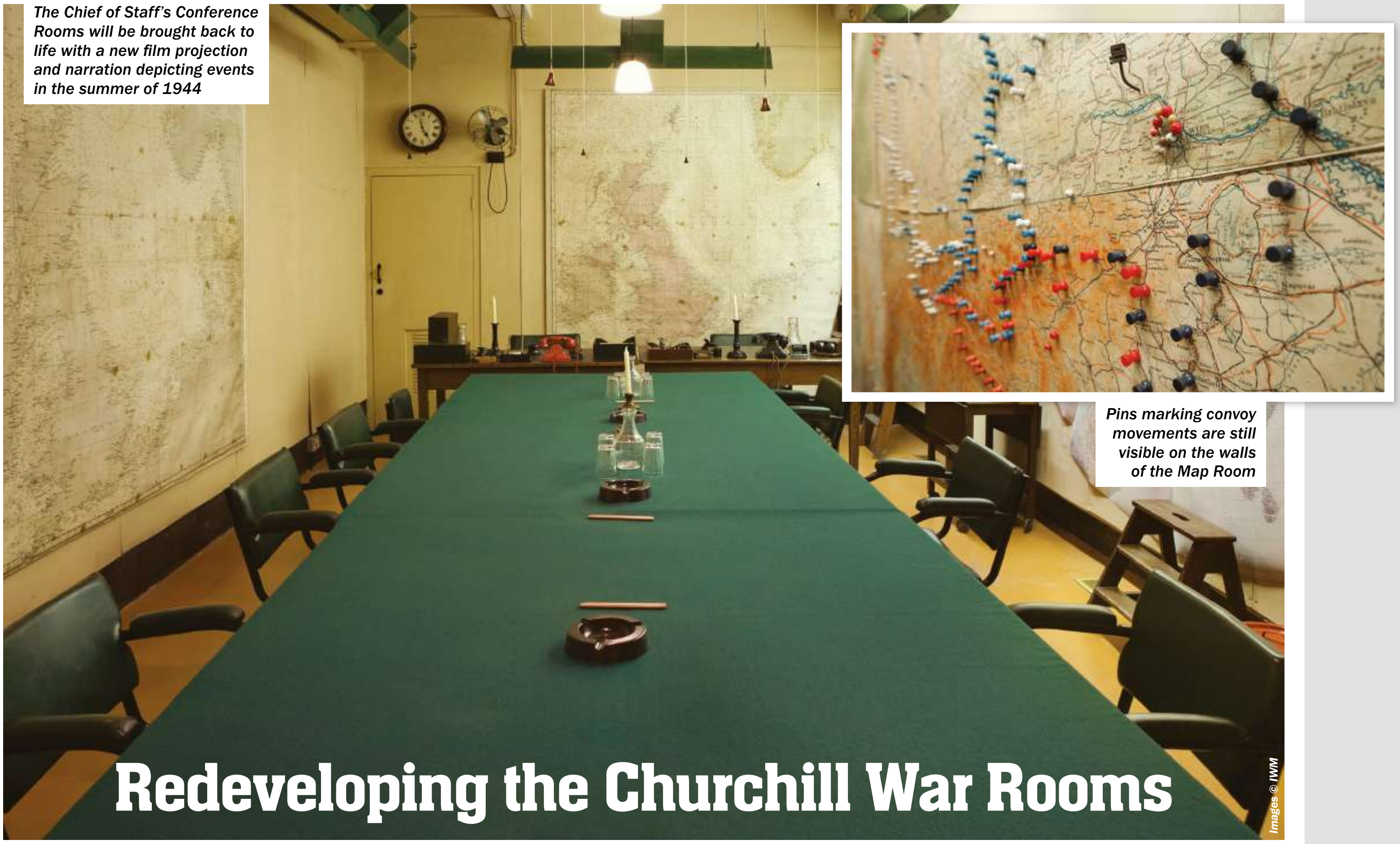
The wider cultural story of these lost communities has been preserved at houshamadyan.org, a site dedicated to re-creating Ottoman Armenian town and village life.

The 13 prints have now joined the Great War Aviation Society's Cross & Cockade Archive of First World War aviation photographs and documents, where they will be preserved for future generations. Visit crossandcockade.com for more info and a full report on these findings.

Images © Peter Dye / Cross and Cockade International

MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover the Churchill War Rooms' latest redevelopment, Eden Camp's upcoming programme and fresh interpretations at Bamburgh Castle's on-site museum



The Chief of Staff's Conference Rooms will be brought back to life with a new film projection and narration depicting events in the summer of 1944

Pins marking convoy movements are still visible on the walls of the Map Room

Images © IWM

Redeveloping the Churchill War Rooms

Frozen in time for decades before being reopened to the public, IWM is set to breathe new life into the Churchill War Rooms with a major redevelopment project

Located beneath the streets of Westminster, the Churchill War Rooms once served as a government headquarters as the Second World War raged above. This site, where ministers, military strategists, typists and cabinet office staff worked tirelessly underground to deliver victory, will now undergo a major redevelopment project to highlight their untold stories.

The transformation of five key areas, carried out by the Imperial War Museum (IWM), is set to be completed by the end of August 2022, the most significant of which will take place in the Chiefs of Staff Conference Room. Here, while its original features will remain untouched, a new audio-visual installation will enable visitors to eavesdrop on a special committee meeting that occurred on 5 July 1944. Those listening will be able to hear a tense debate, based on actual minutes from the meeting, where the chiefs of staff discuss a proposal from Prime Minister Winston Churchill on how to retaliate against Nazi Germany's indiscriminate bombings of Britain. The audio will be accompanied by a gripping film projection and fascinating period imagery from IWM's extensive archive.

Other historic rooms set to be enhanced include the Transatlantic Telephone Room, a secret space disguised as a toilet where Churchill had a secure and direct hotline to US President Franklin D Roosevelt. Further along the corridor, the Map Room will present a newly established introduction to its essential role and purpose, and Room 59 will showcase the overall safety and suitability of the War Rooms with a recently installed exhibit. Photographs of a scarred and devastated London are to be displayed on the walls throughout the facility, as the voices of former staff explain why people sought the iconic bunker's protection. Additionally, the central digital timeline found in the Churchill Museum will be updated with a new animation that chronicles the life and times of Britain's wartime leader.

Kate Clements, IWM Churchill War Rooms Curator, commented: "We know that one of the major appeals of Churchill War Rooms is that it really has been untouched since the end of the Second World War when the lights were switched off, the doors were locked, and it no longer served its intended purpose… Through transforming some of the spaces within the site we can help visitors to understand what exactly took place down here as the conflict grew in scale, enemy attacks became more intense and each decision became more vital, while retaining the originality which makes these rooms so deeply fascinating."

For more information visit: iwm.org.uk

Eden Camp's parade is the largest gathering of veterans in Northern England

Images © Eden Camp Modern History Museum

***Above:** Eden Camp is a unique museum in that it actively preserves history just by existing while simultaneously keeping the memories of local and international people alive*

Eden Camp's upcoming events

Bouncing back from the Covid-19 pandemic, Eden Camp will host a series of events in the coming months to examine its unique place in military history

Located near Malton, North Yorkshire, Eden Camp once hosted Italian and German prisoners during and immediately after the Second World War. The site has since been transformed from its original designation of POW 83 to a thriving modern history museum where, in the latter part of 2022, it will host a series of exciting events.

The August bank holiday will see the return of the living history weekend following two years of Covid-19 disruption. Re-enactments (including displays from the Fighting Elite and the East Yorkshire Regiment Group), demonstrations, activities, talks and games will converge at Eden Camp, with visitors encouraged to dress in 1940s-style military gear or civilian fashion. This year's event will also feature multiple workshops hosted by the archive team, where guests can learn how to make First World War tack biscuits and handle antiques. Around the same time, from 26-29 August, the Be Amazing Arts theatre group will present an original performance about Guernsey evacuee children entitled *A Suitcase for Teddy*.

Finally, on 11 September, Eden Camp's Annual All Service Parade will likewise return after a two-year interruption, where hundreds of regiments will join together in a beautifully colourful and poignant remembrance commemoration – recognised as the largest gathering of veterans in the North of England. With 2022 marking the 80th anniversary of the camp's construction, it is hoped that the parade will be the biggest yet.

Nick Hill, Eden Camp museum manager, says: "Seeing the return of the All Services Parade this year brings such pride to the museum and the team involved."

For more information: edencamp.co.uk

New Bamburgh Castle Museum interpretations

Image: CAG Photography

The castle – dubbed the 'real Bebbanburg' as popularised in Bernard Cornwell's The Last Kingdom book and television series – contains multiple layers of history

The Armstrong and Aviation Museum, housed at Bamburgh Castle, will be refreshed with updated artefact interpretations and other works

Situated in the grounds of Bamburgh Castle – an imposing fortress on the Northumberland coastline that boasted considerable influence during the Anglo-Saxon period – the Armstrong and Aviation Museum is a comparatively new addition that predominantly houses artefacts from the 19th century and two World Wars. The Victorian-era objects within were the inventions of the castle's former owner, Lord William Armstrong (1810 – 1900), while several of the First and Second World War items have a close association with his name.

Established in a laundry building that was constructed in 1897, the museum is currently undergoing significant redevelopment to revitalise its incredible legacy. This will include the installation of detailed artefact interpretations, shedding greater light on the likes of the Armstrong No. 1 Gun Model – a powerful and accurate field artillery piece of the mid-1800s – and two FR9 Gloster Meteor cockpit canopies, which belonged to Britain's first jet fighter but, upon their discovery, had been used as tractor canopies in North Northumberland. Furthermore, roof works, drainage, woodwork and internal improvements will enable Bamburgh Castle ticket-holders to see the many historical layers of the property afresh.

Lisa Waters, collections and conservation manager at Bamburgh Castle, said: "From serving as the epicentre for England and the Kingdom of Northumbria to remaining steadfast amid the Anglo-Scottish Wars, from sustaining damage in the Wars of the Roses to hosting the genius 19th-century wartime inventor Lord Armstrong, Bamburgh Castle has played a crucial role in the making of Britain. We're excited to further highlight its story with the new work being carried out at the Armstrong and Aviation Museum in the coming months."

Image: Paul Buxton

The Armstrong and Aviation Museum is housed in a former Victorian laundry building, which has now undergone extensive repair work

Image: Nick McCann

Among the objects in the museum are inventions from the first Lord Armstrong and several First and Second World War artefacts associated with his name

For more information: bamburghcastle.com

WWII THIS MONTH...

AUGUST 1942

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict

BATTLE OF STALINGRAD

One of the most famous (and decisive) battles of the war began on 23 August 1942 in what is now the Russian city of Volgograd. Then named Stalingrad after the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, the city was strategically important for both Axis and Soviet forces due to its location on the River Volga.

Hitler had ordered a major offensive into southern Russia during the summer of 1942, with the Nazis' ultimate aim being to capture the Caucasus oil fields. The battle for Stalingrad initially went well for the Germans but Stalin ordered it to be defended at all costs. After five months of fighting, the German 6th Army and Italian 8th Army were completely destroyed – but at a huge cost to the Russians. Axis forces suffered about 800,000 casualties and the Soviets lost over 1,100,000 soldiers.

> "THE BATTLE FOR STALINGRAD INITIALLY WENT WELL FOR THE GERMANS BUT STALIN ORDERED IT TO BE DEFENDED AT ALL COSTS"

Images © Alamy, Getty

US Marines rest in a field during the Guadalcanal Campaign

GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN BEGINS

Codenamed Operation Watchtower, the Battle of Guadalcanal began on 7 August 1942 in the Solomon Islands. American-led Allied forces fought on and around the island of Guadalcanal for six months against Japanese forces. It was the first major Allied land offensive against the Japanese during the Pacific War.

On 7 August, US Marines led the offensive by landing not just on Guadalcanal but also Tulagi and the Nggela Islands. Their objective was to use these islands as bases that would eventually help to capture the Japanese base at Rabaul on New Britain. The outnumbered Japanese were initially overwhelmed but they made several heavy counterattacks in the coming months. The Allies eventually forced the Japanese to withdraw from Guadalcanal in February 1943 but at a cost of over 20,000 casualties.

German soldiers defend their positions at Stalingrad in a rare colour photograph

General Zenóbio da Costa inspects the front line in Tuscany with a group of Brazilian officers and soldiers

BRAZIL DECLARES WAR

On 22 August 1942, Brazil became the only independent South American country to declare war on Germany and Italy. It had previously fought for the Allies during WWI but in a limited, primarily naval capacity. As an important German trading partner, Brazil's entry into WWII was not certain and it was initially neutral.

However, increased German attacks on Brazilian merchant shipping near its home waters from 1941 turned public opinion and forced the government into declaring war. The country's navy and air force participated in the Battle of the Atlantic and the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB) primarily fought in Italy. Numbering almost 26,000 men, the FEB gained a reputation for tenacity and fought with great bravery, particularly at the Battle of Collecchio in April 1945.

ALAM EL HALFA

Fought during 30 August – 5 September 1942, the Battle of Alam el Halfa saw four British and New Zealand divisions take on six Axis divisions south of El Alamein in Egypt. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel planned to envelope Lieutenant General Bernard Montgomery as part of Operation Surf – the last large Axis offensive of the Western Desert Campaign.

Thanks to British intelligence information, Montgomery was able to deploy most of his artillery and armour around Alam el Halfa Ridge 32km behind the front line. Axis attacks at this position failed Rommel ordered a withdrawal, which resulted in an Allied defensive victory. Montgomery then continued with plans to increase his forces' strength for an autumn offensive. This resulted in the Second Battle of El Alamein in October.

A British soldier inspects the grave of a German tank crewman who was killed when his tank was destroyed at Alam el Halfa

DUNBEATH AIR CRASH

The fourth son of King George V, Prince George, Duke of Kent had joined the Royal Navy in 1916 and served as a naval officer during the 1920s. He was the younger brother of Kings Edward VIII and George VI and in 1939 he was given high-ranking promotions in the navy, army and air force.

From April 1940, George served exclusively in the RAF and often went on official visits to airbases to boost morale. On 25 August 1942 he took off in a Short Sunderland flying boat from Scotland to fly to Iceland on non-operational duties. His aircraft crashed at Dunbeath on the Scottish northeast coast, killing him and 13 other passengers and crew. There was only one survivor, with the official cause of the crash being a navigational error.

Prince George, Duke of Kent pictured as a group captain shortly after he joined the RAF, 27 May 1940. He was the first member of the British Royal Family to die on active military service for over 400 years

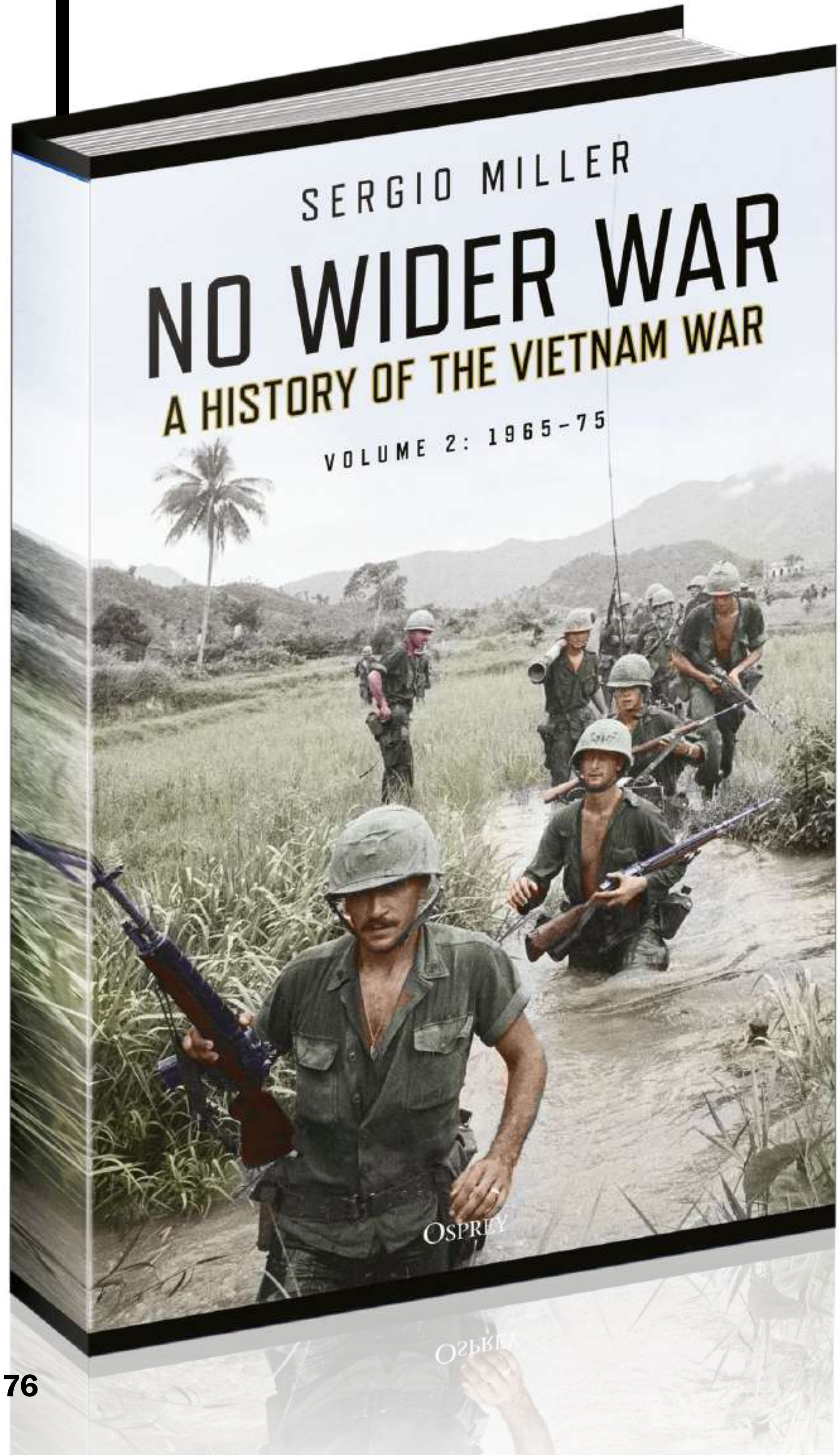
REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books

NO WIDER WAR

A HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR VOLUME 2: 1965-75

THE SECOND INSTALMENT OF SERGIO MILLER'S THOROUGH HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT



Author: Sergio Miller
Publisher: Osprey Publishing
Price: £16.99
Released: Out now

A bit of background: Sergio Miller is a former British army intelligence officer who was inspired to write an in-depth history of the Vietnam War by the conflict the US and its allies waged in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021. It's not hard to see why. Both conflicts aren't just America's longest wars, they're also, arguably, its biggest military follies.

Miller's previous book *No Faith*, which examines Vietnam's history in the wake of World War II, laid the foundation for *No Wider War,* which pretty much picks up where that book left off. It begins with a scene that sounds like an outtake from *Apocalypse Now*.

In March 1965, two US Marine battalions came crashing ashore at Da Nang with their M16s and frag grenades to be greeted on the beach by a group of local girls bearing garlands of fresh flowers to hang around their necks. This curious episode effectively marked the beginning of a conflict that would leave around 3.5 million people dead. Because, although the US had been deploying 'military advisers' to Vietnam since the 1950s, these

***Below:** US soldiers in action at Hue during the Tet Offensive of 1968*

***Below, right:** ARVN soldiers take cover in the old French Cemetery in Saigon*

Images © Alamy

troops represented a distinct shift in policy. Officially they were there to provide airbase security but, as Miller points out, their orders also encouraged them “to conduct security missions, reconnaissance operations and offensive/defensive operations”. They were the thin end of the wedge. Within four years, over half-a-million US troops were stationed in Vietnam thanks largely to the now-debunked Domino Theory.

Told very much from an American or perhaps Western perspective, Miller’s narrative takes us through this escalation, through the Tet Offensive to the Siege of Khe Sanh, the My Lai massacre and out the other side; through to the so-called Vietnamisation of the war, the drawing down of American troops, the Paris Peace Accords and the eventual Fall of Saigon in 1975.

Throughout, Miller very much scopes events through the lens of realpolitik. The Vietnam War is often depicted by historians as a proxy Cold-War conflict or a quasi-imperial misadventure. Miller’s account, however, tends to avoid this. He seems more interested in the business of war. The logistics. The body counts. The blunders. The micro-political machinations. The lies. His is no broad-sweep-of-history narrative, instead there is an almost forensic focus on detail.

If you include its two generous photo galleries, the book comes in at over 500 pages, and the degree of research in it is impressive. Miller makes particularly good use of many recently declassified documents as well as after-action reports, newspaper articles, interviews and a host of internet resources. And although the detail can at times be dense, Miller’s style is light enough to keep you engaged. In fact, the book’s greatest achievement is that it manages to take so many different strands of information and successfully weave them into a coherent narrative. Whether you know little about the Vietnam War or have a shelf full of books on the subject, *No Wider War* is worthy of your time. **NS**

THE CACTUS AIR FORCE

AIR WAR OVER GUADALCANAL

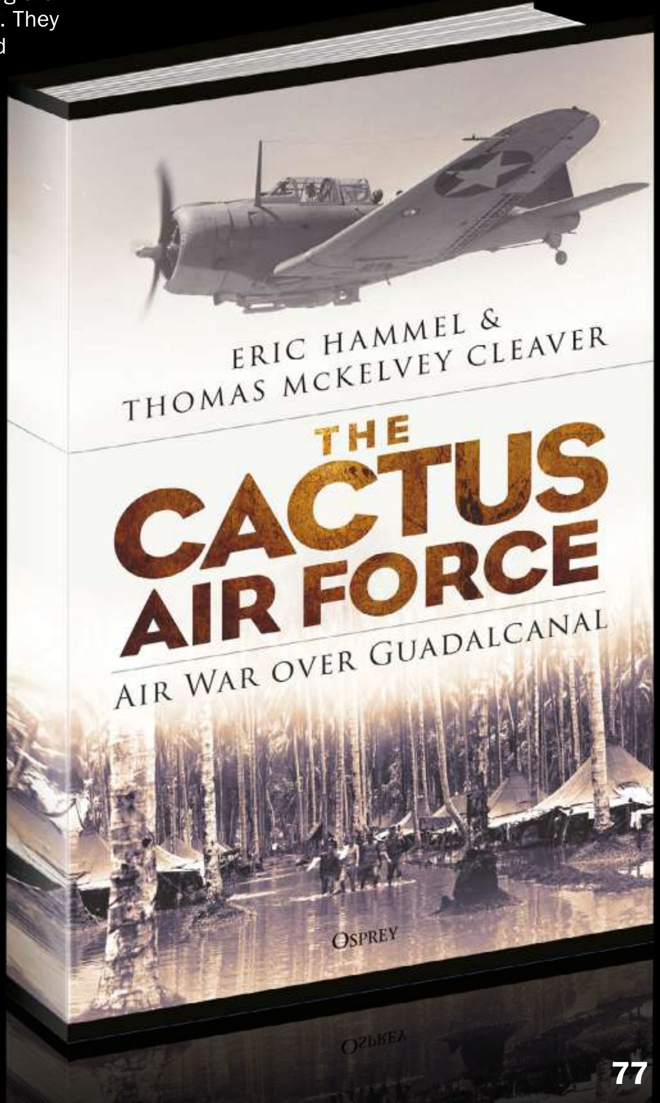
IN THE DARK DAYS FOLLOWING THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR, A SMALL UNIT OF AMERICAN AIRMEN HELD THE FRONTLINE IN THE PACIFIC AGAINST JAPANESE OFFENSIVES

Authors: Eric Hammel & Thomas McKelvey Cleaver
Publisher: Osprey Publishing **Price:** £25 **Released:** 1 September

Operation Cactus was the American plan to blunt the Japanese advance south towards Australia and New Zealand by making a stand at Guadalcanal in 1942. It was the first American amphibious counter-offensive of the war, and with the fighting further west on New Guinea the campaign finally stopped the Japanese expansion in the south Pacific. Drawn from US Navy and US Marines units, the ‘Cactus Air Force’ fought in incredibly primitive conditions, short of virtually every resource and battling the environment as well as the enemy. They operated from aircraft carriers and also from Guadalcanal itself, using a captured Japanese airfield (and one of the prime reasons this island was chosen) which was renamed Henderson Field. They would eventually prevail, and from then on the Japanese would know only retreat in the Pacific.

The late Eric Hammel had interviewed over 150 US veterans of this air campaign before his death in 2020, and had been working with his friend Cleaver to produce a definitive work on the subject. After his death, Cleaver ploughed on alone, and this is the result. As with all of Cleaver’s books, he expertly weaves together the technical, tactical and personal to create a full and rounded account of the air campaign and by necessity the closely related sea campaigns. The books provides a blow-by-blow account which focusses on the American experiences, but also presents the problems and challenges faced by the Japanese, who were also operating with limited resources at the very end of a long supply chain. **SH**

> “THE ‘CACTUS AIR FORCE’ FOUGHT IN INCREDIBLY PRIMITIVE CONDITIONS, SHORT OF VIRTUALLY EVERY RESOURCE”



ROME: STRATEGY OF EMPIRE

THE MOST IMPORTANT BOOK ON THE MILITARY HISTORY OF ROME IN 20 YEARS

Author: James Lacey **Publisher:** Oxford University Press
Price: £26.99 **Released:** 1 November

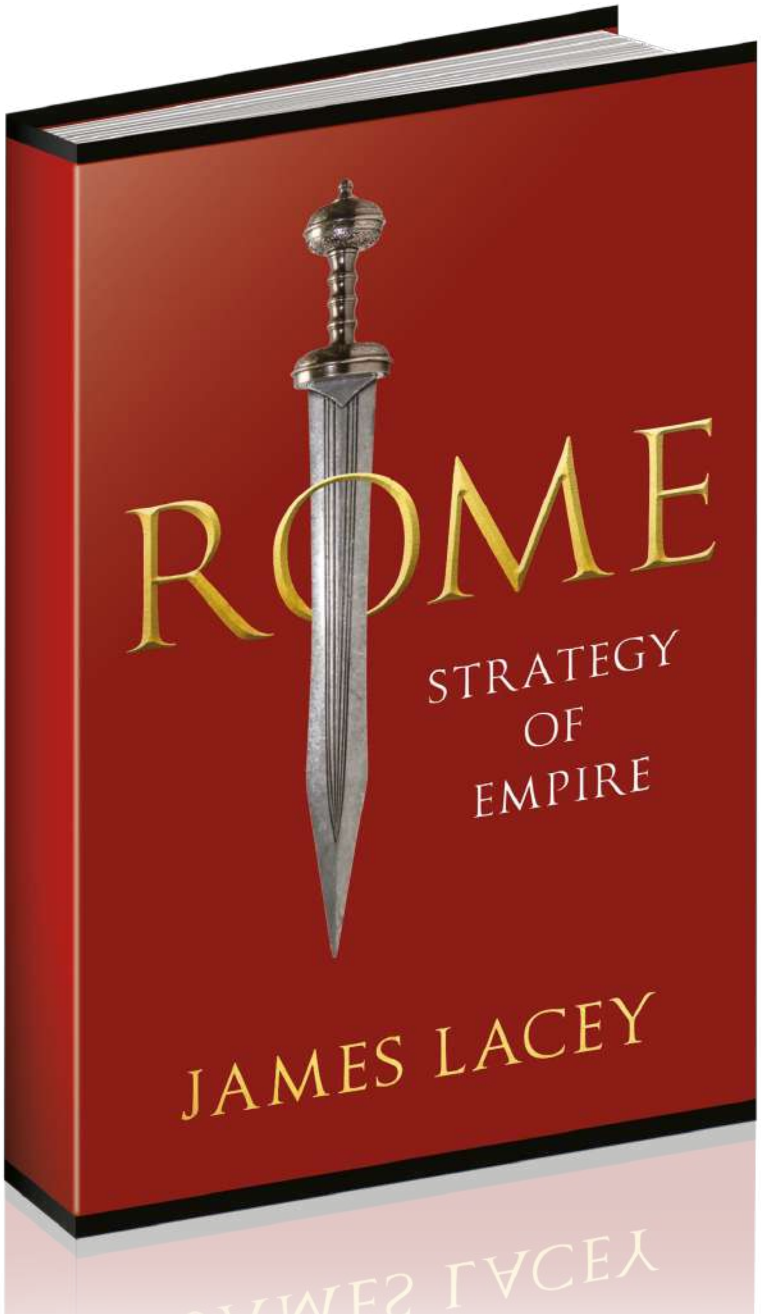
In 1976, Edward Luttwak published *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* in which he argued that the Romans did indeed have a grand strategy. The book caused a sensation, not least for the fact that Luttwak was not a historian but rather an American military strategist and, for a time, a consultant to Ronald Reagan's administration. While admitting its historical sweep, professional historians rushed to debunk the book and, in general, they seem to have succeeded. The consensus among historians of Rome today is that the empire worked on an ad-hoc basis, with individual emperors responding to crises as they arose. The view is that the Empire lacked the ongoing central command necessary for a grand strategy, as well as not having a clear view of frontiers nor any way to map them in order to conduct an overall strategy.

James Lacey, another working military strategist, enters the debate with *Rome: Strategy of Empire* and makes a robust case for Luttwak's overall thesis: the Romans did indeed have a grand strategy and they were more than able to adapt their policies accordingly. Lacey answers the critics, who point out that there is a dearth of Roman historical sources detailing strategic thinking, by looking at the facts on the ground: in particular, the Empire's unparalleled ability to field, feed and focus huge armies throughout the breadth of its domains. Lacey also argues that for the emperor, maps were unimportant because what he needed to know was where a crisis was, which was the nearest legion and how long it would take the legion to get there. Roman itineraries, which enabled generals to estimate accurately how long it would take them to get to crisis points, would, Lacey says, have furnished the required information better than any map. What was more, the Mediterranean and the key frontier rivers, the Rhine and the Danube, enabled the Romans to deploy armies far more quickly than their enemies through their use of maritime or riverine resupply.

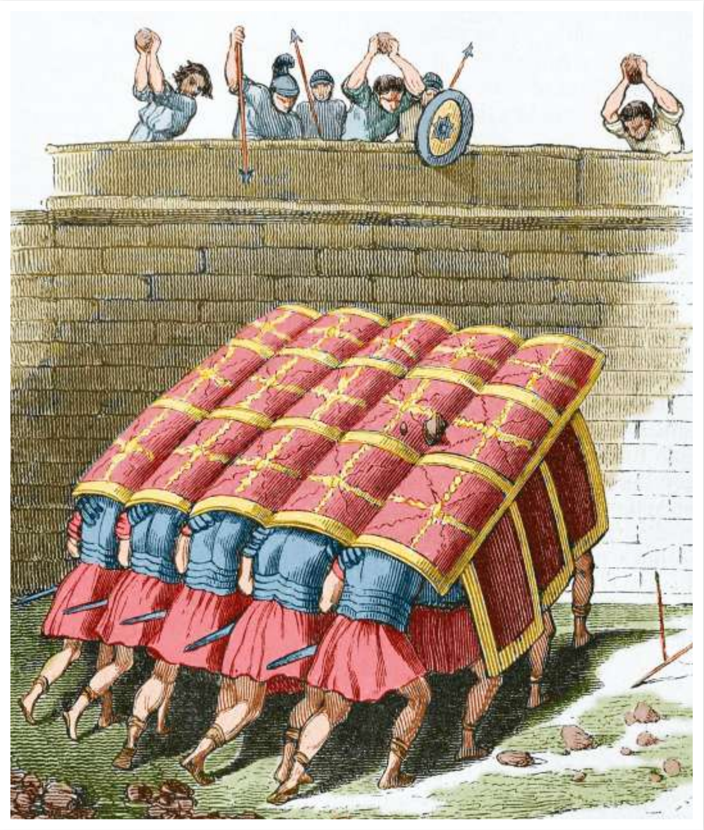
Rome: Strategy of Empire begins with the reign of Augustus and ends with the fall of the Western Empire, providing an overview of the interplay between the Roman economy and Roman strategy. However it suffers, as does Luttwak's book, from not considering in any detail the strategy of the Roman Republic, which actually conquered most of the territory that the later Empire sought to protect and consolidate.

Lacey has the experience of decades in the military before becoming an academic military strategist and this allows him to apply practical knowledge to all aspects of military operations but in particular the crucial importance of logistics. When we compare the huge armies – in the tens of thousands – regularly fielded by the Romans to the armies of the early Medieval period which, in Britain, could number as few as 35 men, we can clearly see the strength of Roman logistical efforts.

In *Rome: Strategy of Empire* Lacey seeks to overturn the established academic consensus. With battle rejoined, it will be fascinating to read their response. But one thing is sure: once this book is published the strategy of the Roman Empire will once again be a hot topic among historians. **EA**



Below: Did the Roman military have a grand strategy or did it just respond to crises on an ad hoc basis?



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ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDS

SYRIA: THE DESERT AND THE SOWN

AN EARLY 20TH CENTURY SNAPSHOT OF THE MIDDLE EAST, BRITISH IMPERIAL THINKING AND MORE

Author: Gertrude Bell **Publisher:** The Folio Society
Price: £80 **Released:** Out now

Gertrude Bell's travels around what we might now call Greater Syria in 1906 are a remarkable tale on many levels. For a start, we get to see a snapshot of this region at the turn of the 20th century, as the Ottoman Empire still stands and as British Imperial interest is receding. A remarkable woman of her time, pushing the boundaries of travel writing while also breaking new ground for herself, there are many layers to Bell's Syria that need to be contemplated to be understood.

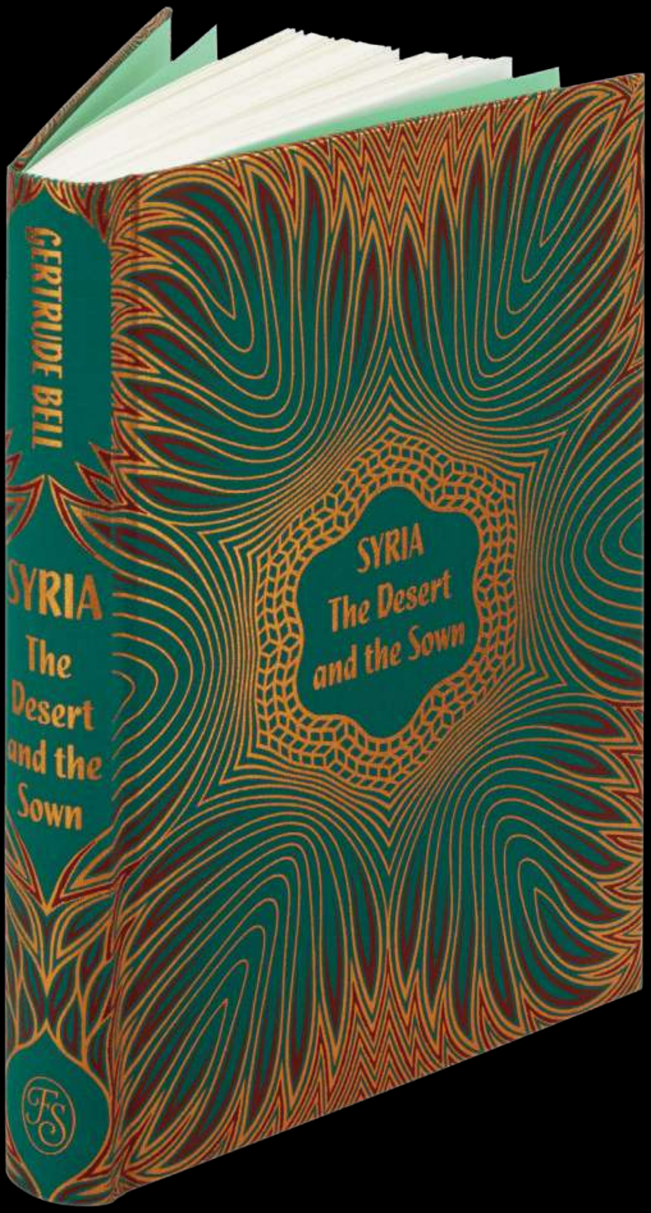
For a start, it's worth knowing a little something of the author, who reveals little of herself in her own work. She had travelled all across the Middle East in the late 19th century and had immersed herself in Arabic language, poetry and archaeology. Bell was also the first and only woman to serve as oriental secretary in the British Imperial service in 1917, helping to draw the borders of modern Iraq. She would be based in Iraq until her death in 1926.

Hopefully what this background portrait gives you is a sense of the woman behind the words; someone of means, education and aptitude. This also comes across in the book, where her writing can often have a condescending, imperialistic tone to it, not uncommon for people of her era (her contemporary TE Lawrence could be accused of the same). She can generalise in broad strokes about certain castes of people. There remains, however, a clear warmth and empathy towards the region from Bell that often touches on admiration.

Syria is an interesting mix of different elements. Part travel diary, part adventure story, part book of archaeology and anthropology, Bell is very good at detailing every last ruin, person and dune she crosses. All of this is accompanied by photographs taken by Bell as she went. These can vary in quality, but they are a remarkable collection in their own right. The unpolished nature is actually quite thrilling, having the feel of holiday snapshots. This is modern Israel and Palestine, Syria and Lebanon as they were in this moment, unadorned, without flourish or artifice.

Attempting to track the exact route of Bell's journey from the text alone would be challenging, but thankfully this Folio edition comes packaged with a fold out map, also presented in its own hardback cover. As you discover looking at the map with Bell's route marked out, it was not always the most linear journey as encounters and intrigue took her in new directions.

And while sometimes Bell's attitudes can jar a modern reader a little, there can be no denying the quality of her work. While she keeps a certain distance from her subject, there are small moments of colour and humour in her writing, often self-deprecating, that also stand out. As a historical document of both the region and the thinking of British intellectuals at this time, *Syria* is a fascinating read. **JG**



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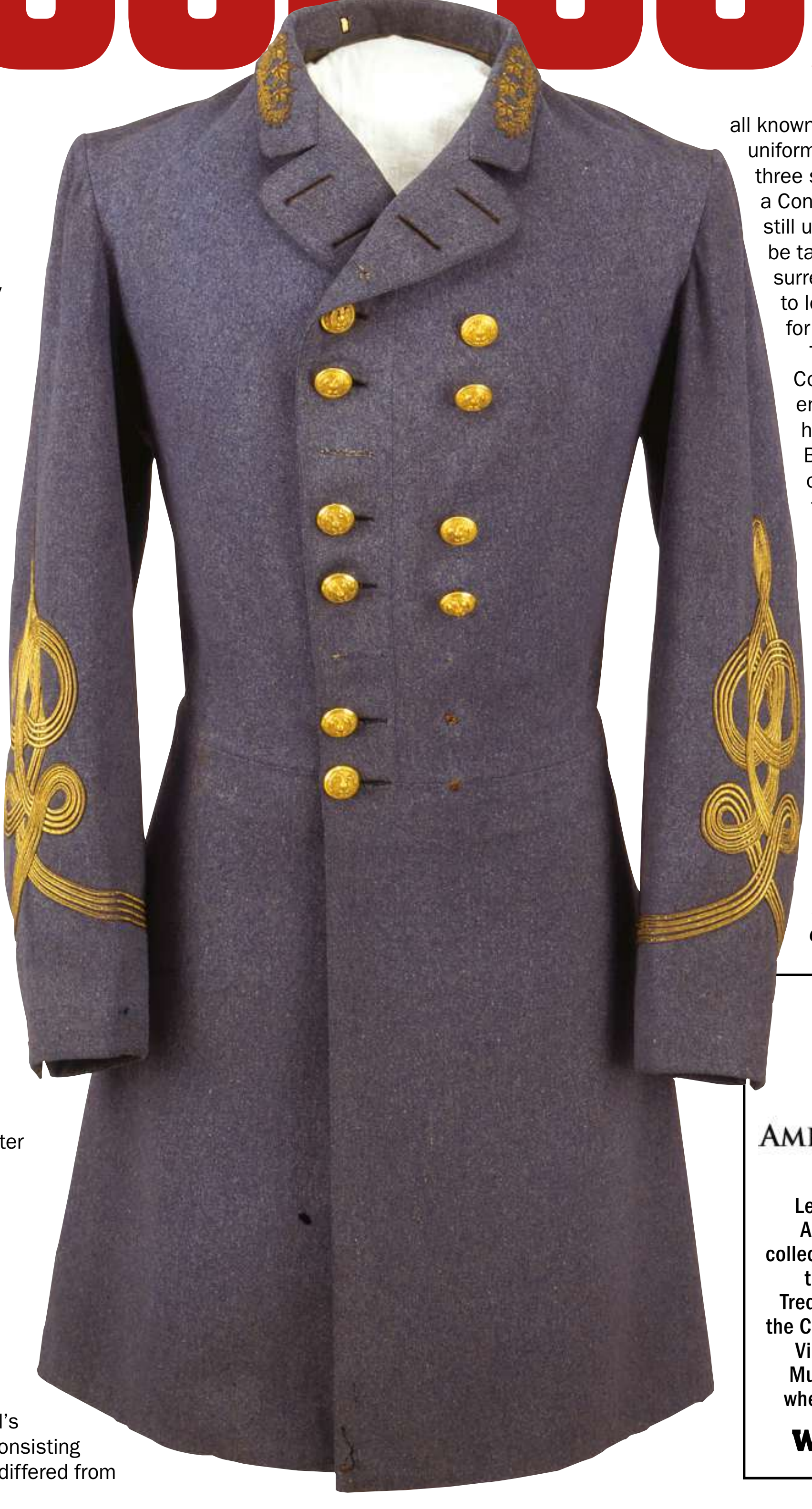
GENERAL LEE'S FROCK COAT

This uniform was worn by Confederate General Robert E Lee on the day he surrendered to the Union's Ulysses S Grant

In Appomattox, Virginia, on 9 April 1865, Confederate General Robert E Lee awoke to the belief that the American Civil War could still be won by the South. That morning, thousands of disheartened rebels had lined up for battle a short distance from the local courthouse. The commander, whose forces had attempted to manoeuvre away but had been blocked by Union General Ulysses S Grant's troops, was in the thick of the fight. However, his hopes for victory would be dashed when Federal reinforcements cornered his men.

It was the home of Appomattox resident Wilmer McLean where Lee and Grant would meet to discuss the terms of a Confederate surrender. Arriving at around one o'clock the Union general – true to his character – wore his mud-splattered field uniform. Lee, on the other hand, came adorned in full dress attire, including his frock coat with a sash and sword. His ceremonial double-breasted uniform, created with English broadcloth, had eight buttons in each row, set in pairs, while the cadet grey wool itself had no facings or piping. It also boasted embroidered gold general's insignia on the turn-down collar, consisting of three stars with a wreath. This differed from all known wartime images of Lee in uniform that had him wearing the three stars without a wreath of a Confederate colonel – for reasons still unknown. Having expected to be taken prisoner as part of the surrender terms, Lee had wanted to look his best and so dressed for the occasion.

The general-in-chief of Confederate armies knew when entering McLean's house that history was about to be made. By 3pm, the formal copies of the letters containing the terms and acceptance of surrender had been signed. But the war was not over, and nor did Lee intend to influence other Confederate forces to surrender. He left Appomattox on 12 April, the day of the formal infantry surrender ceremony and the fourth anniversary of the first shots at Fort Sumter in South Carolina that had led to the conflict.



***Left:** Confederate purchasing agent Major JB Ferguson had the coat shipped from England and through the Federal naval blockade for General Lee's use*

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR MUSEUM

Lee's frock coat is part of the American Civil War Museum collection. The institution maintains three unique sites: Historic Tredegar and the White House of the Confederacy, both in Richmond, Virginia, and the Appomattox Museum, located near the site where the surrender took place.

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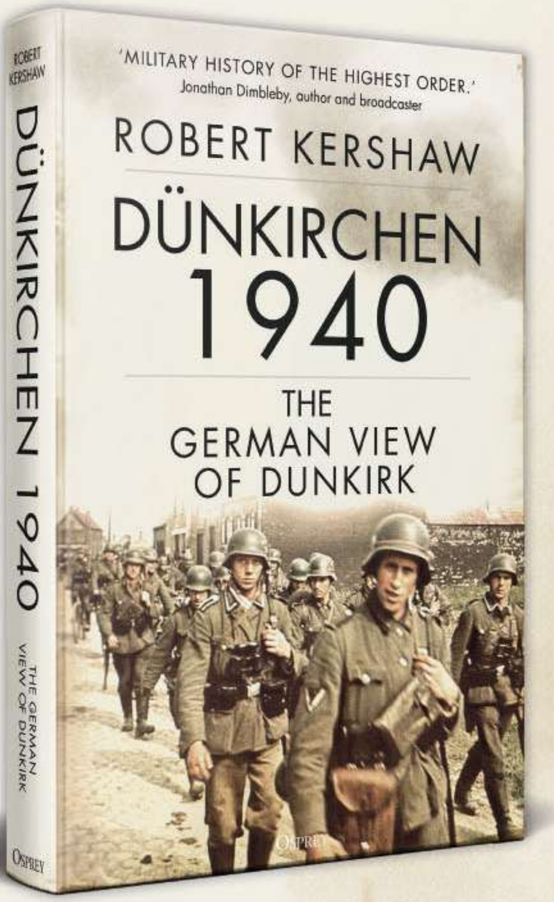
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